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THE CAMEO OF THE EMPRESS

A NOVEL

· SIGMUND · KRAUSZ ·

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Kraus.

Principal Characters in the Story

JOHN OLDFIELD	An enthusiastic young archæologist of the Smithsonian Institute, former football player, who has the reputation of being a woman hater, but is forced to succumb to the charms of one of the weaker sex.
ROBERT BRUSH	A young American painter living in Rome, who has great talent, but loves woman only too well. He believes, however, that she is a leaden weight on the wings of genius, and is, therefore, in principle, against marriage.
LUCILE PENROSE	A charmingly beautiful American girl of too much sentiment, whose romantic temperament leads her into trouble.
MRS. EMORY	Oldfield's aunt and Lucile's guardian, a sweet-natured old lady with tendencies to match-making and exaggerated ideas of Chicago.
PAOLO ARATTA	An exceedingly handsome young Italian villain, whose revengeful character furnishes many of the dramatic incidents of the story.
CARMELINA TOSETTI	A young Italian model who poses for Brush, and whose charms and ingenuity play havoc with his anti-matrimonial principles.
JINRADASA	A mysterious Hindoo and adept in the occult sciences, whose hypnotic powers aid materially in the development of the plot.
MR. STICKNEY	An American porous-plaster manufacturer with a genius for advertising,
AND THE TWO MISSES DRYDEN	bachelor maidens of New York (who have seen all parts of the world with the exception of that West of the Allegheny mountains), furnish the humor and, incidentally, the third love theme in the story.

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"O DIO!"—THE POKER DROPPED TO THE FLOOR.
— *Page 138.*

THE CAMEO OF THE EMPRESS

BY

SIGMUND KRAUSZ

ILLUSTRATED BY
LUCILE PATTERSON

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To the Press Club of Chicago,
in the atmosphere of which it was conceived,
the author dedicates this book.

PS

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THE CAMEO OF THE EMPRESS

I

"EVIVA IL AMERICANO"

The gold-braided cap of the *portier* was tipped with a respectful salute, and his satellites at the entrance bowed deeply.

John Oldfield, American, chestnut-haired and smooth-shaven, nodded pleasantly to them, as he stepped out of the hotel.

In the golden morning sun, the Piazza Municipio bore its usual picturesque aspect. This was, evidently, not new to Oldfield, for he paid little attention to it. He hailed a cab. Several of the small Neapolitan *"vetture"* dashed up to the curb. Without listening to the clamorous appeals of their drivers, he mounted the first one.

"Santa Lucia!" he commanded. The driver cracked his whip and started at a sharp trot, while

his disgruntled competitors growlingly returned to their stands.

A beggar ran alongside the vehicle as far as the Galleria Umberto. To get rid of him, Oldfield threw him a soldo. Then he was pursued by a whole pack of mendicants who had observed the act.

Repeated "bastas" and whip lashes drove them off, not, however, without their hurling curses after the vehicle.

"What else can one expect of a people whose illiteracy still makes the public scribe a necessity," Oldfield grumbled inwardly, just then being driven past the Theater San Carlo. He had thrown a glance at the small tables under its arcades, at which several of the writers were plying their vocation.

The cab now passed the Strada del Gigante, and turned into the Quai of Santa Lucia.

As it neared the landing of the Capri boats, a great shout of *"Eviva! Eviva il Americano!"* reached Oldfield's ear. Looking in the direction of the noise, he perceived a throng of excited boatmen and dock laborers. They surrounded a *vettura,* from which a tall light-haired young man with dainty mustache vainly tried to dismount.

"What, in the name of blazes, do you want of me? Get out of the way!" the besieged man cried in fluent Italian that smacked, however, of a strong Yankee flavor.

The crowd did not budge. On the contrary, it

became denser as the mob on the outer edge pressed toward the carriage. *"Eviva! Eviva il Americano!"* The hurrahs were renewed with increased vigor. Those nearest the vehicle waved their arms and shouted *"per maccaron; per maccaron, signor!"*

"Get out of the way, I say," thundered the young fellow again in a voice which, while intended to sound stern and commanding, was counterbalanced by a humorous twinkle in his blue eyes. "You will make me miss my boat."

"Ah, signor, it was I who knew it first. I told you that you would get it back."

"Per Bacco! He is a liar, *eccellenza.* It was I who told you."

"I gave the police the clew."

"Why, the girl who found it is my cousin. *Per maccaron, signor!*"

"Go to the devil, all of you!" The half angry, half laughing American again tried to dismount. As before, he was prevented by the surging wall of garlic-breathing humanity about him.

Oldfield's cab had meanwhile approached the landing near enough to make the features of his countryman distinguishable. The voice had sounded familiar to him and, now, he recognized the hard-pressed man.

"I'll be hanged if it isn't Robert Brush," he ex-

claimed with some amazement. He rose in the cab which he had stopped, and waved his arm.

"Hallo, Bob!"

The young man started. For a moment he looked sharply at Oldfield. Then his features beamed with pleasant surprise.

"Bless my soul! Is it you, John Oldfield, or your spirit in broad daylight?" he shouted above the noise of the crowd.

"It is I, in flesh and bone, Bob! But what, in the world, do these beggars want of you?"

"Tips—tips, old boy. Help me out of this rabble, and I'll tell you. Why, you arrive like a god-send to me."

Oldfield jumped from his vehicle, and tried to force his way to Brush. He might just as well have tried to push his head through a stone wall. He had been on the football team of his college, but here all his prowess was of no avail. The mob stood like the Rock of Gibraltar.

Suddenly a bright idea struck him. It was not an original one, but bound to succeed. He had seen it employed only the day before when a party of tourists had been pursued by a horde of beggars.

"Throw them a handful of coppers, Bob!" he shouted to Brush. "And throw them as far from you as you can."

"Funny, I never thought of that. I know the

trick too," Brush called back, diving his hand into his pocket.

A second later a metallic rain on the pavement scattered the hungry crowd around him. Like a pack of hyenas the ragged descendants of Romulus rushed for the coins, and the space around the carriage became clear.

While the mob was scrambling for the coppers, Oldfield and Brush heartily shook hands, and gained a boat. As the oarsman pulled from shore towards the Capri steamer, they looked at each other with a satisfied chuckle at the success of the ruse.

"Now, John, how in the world did *you* get here? When did you arrive in Naples?"

"I landed several days ago. Came over on the *Augusta Victoria.* But what could have moved *you* to forsake your studio in Rome? Last I heard, the Eternal City still held you under its spell."

"That's right. My permanent studio is still there. Only lately I have made Naples my temporary headquarters. I am sketching here and in the vicinity."

"Glad to hear it, because I, myself, intend to remain for quite a while."

"To do what?"

"Pursue my archaeological studies."

"Is that still your hobby? I thought archaeology was only a passing fancy of yours, when we were last together in Rome."

"No; I have made it my career. Didn't you know?"

"Come to think, I believe one of our mutual friends wrote me so."

"Well, Bob, you look bully; brown as a nut and tough like hickory."

"I feel that way. I tell you, this climate here is great. It would bring Lazarus back from death's door."

They had arrived at the steamer, and climbed on board. A convenient bench under the forward awning looked inviting. After seating themselves, John started again the conversation.

"I am dying to hear what kind of a scrape you got into with that rabble on the *quai?*" he queried.

"It's a long story to tell."

"We have two hours or more before us, and your story will add to the enjoyment of the trip." He chased away an importunate peddler, and settled himself more comfortably, with his face towards the shore.

Brush filled his pipe and handed him the tobacco pouch. "Those rascals there were taking me for an American millionaire," he began; "when the fact is, that for the last three days I was utterly broke."

"How did that happen?"

"I don't know myself. At least not exactly. We'll find out when we get to Capri."

"Non capisco! I am not good at conundrums, Bob."

"Well, three days ago, I either lost my pocket-

book, or it was stolen from me. Where this happened, I don't know; but it must have occurred somewhere between my rooms in the Via Umberto and the Capri village, where I sketched that day."

"And you were careless enough to carry all your money on your person?"

"I'll know better from now on."

"What did the loss amount to?"

"Two hundred dollars in American money and two five-hundred-lira notes. But what made the situation most awkward for me was that the wallet also contained a New York draft for two thousand dollars."

Oldfield whistled softly. "I see."

"All I had left was about fifty liras in change, which I carried loose in my pocket. Part of this money I had to spend in annulling my draft and cabling for a new one."

"But what has all this to do with the mob at the landing and your being taken for a millionaire?"

"You'll see in a minute. It is where one of the humorous episodes of the situation comes in."

"I am listening."

"When I returned from Capri the same evening, I was advised to seek the aid of the Neapolitan police. I did so, but, I tell you, it was a funny experience. The official who listened to my story insisted on taking, what he called, a protocol. After I had described in the minutest detail the contents of the

pocketbook, he made me state, in addition, my name, age, place of birth, religion, business—"

"Is that all?" interrupted Oldfield laughingly.

"Not by any means. Though I could not see what all this information had to do with my loss, the official persisted in including in his protocol the names and nationalities of my parents and the number of brothers and sisters I had; and I still wonder why he did not compel me to give him the entire genealogy of my family. Withal, he was so polite that I could not resent his official curiosity."

"Italian red tape," remarked Oldfield.

"I guess so. Well, he telegraphed the same evening instructions to the *carabinieri* in Capri, and put some detectives on the case in the city. Next morning, he summoned to his office the cabman who had taken me to the *quai* and a number of boatmen from Santa Lucia, from which landing I had been rowed to the Capri steamer. In short, he did his best toward the recovery of my wallet, but admitted that, if the loss occurred in Naples, there was little hope for it."

"I cannot, as yet, see any connection between your misfortune and the mob at the Santa Lucia landing."

"I am coming to that now. You see, all this investigation resulted in the rumor of my loss being spread on the *quai*, and you know how such things get exaggerated. It is like a snowball rolling down

a hillside. I became an American Croesus, and the lost sum grew in dimensions until it reached a fabulous amount. Have you an idea, John, of the imaginative powers of these beggars? Why, it was rumored that a reward of twenty thousand liras had been offered to the lucky finder who, on top of that, was to get the hand of the rich American's sister."

Oldfield broke into an uproarious laugh. When his mirth had subsided, he once more remarked: "Still I can't make out the connection."

"Why, the rescals at the landing got to know me, because, for a day or so, I hung around there in company of a detective. Now, last evening a policeman informed me that the wallet had been recovered in Capri."

"Lucky dog!"

"I was also told that I would have to present myself in person at the police station there in order to get it, and was on the way to the boat when the mob at the landing surrounded me and—"

"They, evidently, had advance news of your good luck," interrupted Oldfield again, "and, with their innate beggar instinct, clamored for tips. Isn't that it?"

"Exactly! And if it were not for you, I might still be stalled there in the crowd."

Their chat now turned to reminiscences, to college days, and the time when, several years before, they had roomed together in Rome. Ere they be-

came aware of it, the hotel runners' shrill cries of "Tramontana—Tramontana!"—"La Sirena—La Sirena!" advised them that they had reached Sorrento. Half an hour later, they approached Capri.

The steamer, as usual, turned towards the Blue Grotto, but Oldfield and Brush, who had seen it before, took one of the small boats in waiting there, and had themselves rowed directly to the Marina Grande.

As they stepped ashore, they noticed that the *quai*, near the landing, was thronged with natives. Against the closed iron grill of the landing bridge leaned an officer of the *carabinieri*. An inquiry by Oldfield brought out the astonishing information that this crowd, too, was waiting for the arrival of the millionaire who had lost a large sum of money. It had been found on the island, and the captain of the *carabinieri* had been notified that the loser was to arrive by the 11 o'clock boat. He had personally come to the landing to escort the American to the police station where he was to get his property back.

Brush and Oldfield looked at each other inquiringly.

"What do you think of that?" asked the former.

"It looks as if you would have to stand another siege, as soon as the beggars find out that you are the 'Rockefeller' in question."

"They won't, if I can prevent it."

"What will you do?"

"A simple thing. The mob is waiting for the steamer. I'll slip through the crowd to the captain, and inform him of the situation. He will find means for us to escape without being noticed."

"A good idea!"

Brush pushed his way inconspicuously through the throng. When he had reached the police official, he whispered something to him. A short conversation *sotto voce* followed. Then Brush slipped back through the closely packed natives, as quietly as he had come. They had shown but little interest in the episode, and were attentively watching the boat which was now approaching from the Grotto.

Before it had drawn close, the captain of the *carabinieri* too, pushed his way toward one of the carriages waiting at the Marina. Some of the spectators were wondering at this, but the steamer had now anchored, and the throng centered all its attention on the small landing boats. One of them was to bring the millionaire ashore. Even before they became aware of the identity of the expected victim, a lusty shout of "*Eviva! Eviva!*" broke from hundreds of sun-browned throats.

Meanwhile the captain, Brush and Oldfield had mounted the vehicle selected by the former, and were being rapidly driven to the town of Capri. No one seemed to have observed their departure.

On arriving in front of the police station, how-

ever, they found another smaller gathering of natives waiting, which also greeted them with vociferous acclamation and demands for *maccaron*.

The captain led the way to his private office. During the short drive from the *quai*, they had not spoken of the business which had brought them together. But, now, Brush was eager to hear the details of the recovery of his wallet.

"It was found by a young girl in the street, up in Anacapri," said the captain in answer to his question.

"It must have fallen out of my pocket when I dismounted from the carriage to take a snapshot. How did you recover it? Did the finder bring it to the station?"

"Not at all. The young girl, on examining the contents of the pocketbook, did not take the bills for money. She had never seen foreign banknotes, or Italian bills of such large denomination. The draft she probably took for a worthless piece of paper and—"

"Polycrates couldn't have been luckier, Bob," remarked Oldfield.

"But if the girl didn't bring it to the station, how did you get hold of the wallet?" interposed Brush on his part.

"*E bene, signor*, when we received instructions from Naples to look for the lost money, one of my men, whom I had put on the case, heard that a

young girl, up in Anacapri, had found something. He followed the clue, and recovered the pocketbook. I believe you will find its contents intact. Before handing it over to you, however, it is my duty to ask you to identify yourself."

Brush did so by describing the wallet and its contents and by producing some papers.

As he slipped the wallet in his pocket, the captain added: "I must also call your attention to the law which entitles the finder to a reward of ten per cent of the amount recovered."

"I'll pay it with pleasure, if you tell me to whom."

"The girl is waiting here at the station. She was informed by me of your impending arrival this noon."

"Will you call her in, please."

The captain struck a small bell, and gave an order to the *carabiniere* who appeared at the summons.

A moment later, a group of natives, consisting of the young woman, her parents and several other relatives, entered the room. All were dressed in holiday clothes. The captain changed one of the five-hundred-lira notes for Brush, and motioned the girl to approach.

Brush counted off two hundred and fifty liras, and handed them to her. "Here, my child," he said, "is your reward. I have added fifty liras to what is due to you by law, as a special proof of my recognition."

"Grazia—grazia, signor!" The young girl at-

tempted to kiss his hand which he promptly withdrew. He could not prevent, however, her parents from showering on the sleeves of his coat and other parts of his attire similar demonstrations of gratitude.

"You don't know, sir, how happy you have made these people," said the captain in an undertone, after Brush had stopped their effusiveness. "Why, with this money you have furnished the girl a dot, that will make her a desirable match for any young man of her village."

"Is that so?" smiled Brush, now looking for the first time attentively at the young woman.

She was a slender creature, with an oval face out of which a pair of dark, dreamy eyes looked at him. Her black, glossy hair, parted madonna-like in the middle, was uncovered, and her picturesque costume completed an ensemble which could not fail to please an artist. She seemed embarassed by the remark of the captain.

"Will you give me your name, child," asked Brush encouragingly.

"Carmelina—Carmelina Tosetti, *eccellenza,*" replied her mother, before the blushing girl had a chance to answer.

"I'll not forget it. I shall see you again."

"And now you may go," added the captain; "all of you—*addio!*"

"A fine face—a true artist's model," remarked

Oldfield, after they had withdrawn. "She ought to interest you, Bob."

"She would make a splendid one, indeed. That's what I had in mind when I said I would see her again."

The captain refused to accept anything for himself or his men in recognition of their trouble. Brush and Oldfield parted from him with a simple expression of gratitude and an increased appreciation of the activity and efficiency of the Italian police force.

Before they could drive off, however, Brush was again compelled to throw a handful of coppers out of the carriage, in order to divert the attention of the shouting and hurrahing mob.

"And what will we do now?" asked Brush, relieved.

"Well, I came to spend a few days on the island," rejoined Oldfield. "I suppose you will return to Naples?"

"That was my intention. I'll stay with you, though, if you want me to."

"Delighted to have you, old boy. Where shall we put up?"

"If it were not for the sensation I am afraid of creating at the Marina Grande, I would stay at one of the hotels down there. You get better food. As it is, it will be wiser to go to the Pagano."

II

CARMELINA

After securing rooms at the well-known rendezvous of artists and tourists, suggested by Brush, he and Oldfield had luncheon. In the afternoon they walked up to the frowning ruins of the Villa Tiberiana. Brush had his sketch book with him and occupied himself with portraying some ragged bits of landscape, while Oldfield walked about the dilapidated walls studying the ancient construction.

On the way back, a glass of Capri wine refreshed them at the little *osteria* "Salto di Tiberio." An impromptu performance of the Tarantella, by a plump and somewhat overripe Italian girl and a barefooted young fellow, did not interest them long and they mounted a small observation tower in the rear of the inn, built directly on the edge of a sheer precipice of over seven hundred feet.

Way below white-crested breakers dashed against great brown boulders licked smooth by the continuous attacks of the sea. Ages ago they had probably been thrown there by some seismic disturbance, or

had been loosened from the mother rock by natural disintegration.

Oldfield leaned against the low parapet and gazed down the yawning depth.

"To imagine that there was a time when the caprice of a mentally unbalanced autocrat could condemn a victim to be thrown from this dizzy height," he soliloquized. Then turning to Brush: "Bob, do you think that a person could retain consciousness during such a frightful fall until the body is dashed to pieces on those jagged rocks below?"

"I don't know, and don't care. Neither have I a desire to experiment. But, what in blazes induces you to such morbid thoughts?"

"Nothing in special. It's that gloomy pile up there, that former stronghold of Tiberius, which reminded me that we are here at the spot where, according to tradition, that degenerate monster had the victims of his wrath hurled into eternity. I can almost hear their shrieks as they were precipitated into space."

"Well, forget it, John. Let's rather rejoice in the fact that we live in a better era. Today such monsters would, themselves, be flung down there if they showed inclinations to emulate that old Roman. Come, sit down here. So far I didn't have a chance to quiz you thoroughly.

Oldfield seated himself next to Brush, and the latter continued: "You haven't told me yet how you

came to make of your hobby a professional career. It's three years or more that I have been without direct news from you."

"There isn't much to tell, Bob. My father died about the time I returned to the States. He left me a comfortable fortune, though much less than I had reason to expect from the way he supported me during my college years and an extended period of travel."

"He was thought to be immensely wealthy."

"He was, but unfortunate speculations had made considerable inroads on his fortune. Nevertheless my inheritance is more than adequate for my needs. I studied hard and, later, accepted a call to the Smithsonian Institution. Not because I needed the position, but because I am infatuated with the work."

"And you are here on duty?"

"No, I have leave of absence for several months and have come over to pursue private researches into the social life of the ancient Romans. You know the National Museum in Naples and the work done in Pompeii are suited for this purpose *par excellence.*"

"I am aware of that and am tempted to feel glad over the Pompeiian catastrophy. Otherwise I might not have had the chance to be now together with you." Brush's face beamed with satisfaction.

"By the way," he added, "where do you stop in Naples?"

"At the 'Londres,' on the Piazza Municipio."

"Why there, in the noisy center of the city? I should think you'd prefer one of the hotels on the Via Carracciolo or up on the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele."

"The Londres is more convenient to the *Museo Nazionale,* where I spend a good deal of my time."

"That's true. Were it not for that, I might suspect that you selected it for its convenience to the Galleria Umberto."

"Why so?"

"For the sake of the pretty Neapolitan girls that one may see there evenings. But I forgot that you were always somewhat of a misogynist. Do you still entertain a prejudice against the sex?"

"You are mistaken, Bob. I never was a woman hater. In fact, it is incomprehensible to me how a man who knew a mother or sisters ever could be, unless he is a moral degenerate of a certain class. True, I do not seek woman's society, but neither do I make strenuous efforts to avoid it. And how about you? Are you, with all your love of the fair sex, still heart and fancy free?"

"I am. You see, I admire *all* the pretty girls. Blond, brunette or auburn, I love them all. But I am too much wedded to my art to allow my heart to run away with my reason. I believe that an artist should have only one mistress—his art. Woman hangs, like a leaden weight, on the wings of genius."

"I have heard different opinions, but I, myself, am

rather inclined to favor the latter view. Perhaps we are wrong."

"No; I am convinced it is right."

"So you never intend to worship at the altar of Hymen?"

"I prefer that of Venus."

"I always knew you were a heathen."

"Not at all! According to my tenets, I consider myself a fairly good Christian."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, I love mankind, and if I show a little preference for good-looking women, I only imitate in some way the Creator."

"How so?"

"Well, does it not say somewhere in the good book that to him, too, the odor of some sacrifices is sweeter than that of others?"

"I am afraid you are a sophist. But then, why not select one, the sweetest, and stick to her?"

"I suppose because God put too great a love in my heart. Man, with few exceptions, is polygamously inclined by nature, like the male of all the animal world."

"But man has elevated himself above the brute. What were the laws of marriage and monogamy created for?"

"They were made by man. And if I follow the instincts of nature, put into my heart by a higher be-

ing, am I worse for it? In worshipping woman, his fairest creation, do I not worship God?"

"Maybe; but I dare say you exclude from your worship types like those two there." Oldfield called Brush's attention to two conspicuously thin, angular ladies who, with a portly looking man, had just dismounted from donkeys and were about to enter the Salto di Tiberio. At the same time he drew back from the parapet, apparently in order not to be seen by them.

"Do you know these women?" queried Brush.

"Unfortunately, yes. They were my table companions on the *Augusta Victoria.* We may see them, probably, mount after a while with their Baedeckers to gush about the view and their former travels. Let's away before they come up here."

They left the lookout hastily and turned into the path leading down to the Marina. As they descended between the garden walls lining the road, which were overhung by fruit-laden branches of orange and lemon trees, Brush again picked up the thread of conversation.

"They looked like Americans," he remarked.

"They are, but of a class which tends to make the whole nation ridiculous. They belong to the genus of travelers—that is the two women do—who seem to know no other subject of conversation but their numerous ocean trips, of which they keep religious account. The United States, west of the Alleghen-

ies, is *terra incognita* to them, but they have been to all the centers of Europe. They do not know the grandeurs of the Rockies, the beauty of the Yosemite, the wild charm of the Yellowstone, but they are at home in every hotel in Switzerland and on the Riviera and they have seen the midnight sun up at Hammerfest. Of Paris, Rome and Athens, they speak as of Broadway and Pennsylvania Avenue, but they remember Paris principally by the Magasin de Louvre or a good meal at Paillard's, and are apt to place the Acropolis in Rome and the Coliseum in Athens."

"That's a rather severe arraignment," protested Brush laughingly. "It isn't quite as bad as that."

"Worse—worse, Bob, with some members of the genus. Why, I felt like a martyr, at table, between those two on one side and Mr. Stickney, the porous plaster manufacturer, on the other. The latter, who is the man with them, is suffering from the advertising mania. His mouth overflows with his sticky ware; unfortunately without pasting it up permanently. He—"

"He might feel like performing that service for you, were he to hear you," interrupted Brush with a grin.

"Why, Stickney actually spoke of entering negotiations with the governor of Gibraltar with a view of using the Rock for a gigantic advertisement for his porous plaster."

"You are jesting, John. How could such an idea enter the mind of a rational man?"

"That is what I, too, would ask, if he, himself, hadn't spoken of it to me. When the steamer approached Gibraltar, he came on deck with his marine glass. I happened to stand next to him. For a long while he looked all over the rock wall, then he said wonderingly: 'Why, I can't see it.' 'What can't you see?' I asked, curiously. 'The advertisement of the Commercial Insurance Company. You know the one which claims to be as strong as Gibraltar?' 'Ah, yes, it is advertised in all the magazines.' 'Well, it looks as if they had allowed their contract to lapse, and I have a good notion to negotiate for the space. Wouldn't it look fine up there, in fifty-foot letters, "Use Stickney's Porous Plaster; Best on Earth."' "

"You are exaggerating. I am sure it is a carricature you are drawing of the man."

"Not at all—not at all! The worst of it is that he and the two old maids took a liking to me—perhaps because I proved to be a silent listener—and between the plaster Scylla on one side and the spinster Charybdis on the other, I felt, unlike Ulysses, not like tying myself to the mast, but hanging myself on the top of it."

"Fortunately the trip does not last very long."

"Too long; altogether too long under such circumstances. They not only bored me, but they scared me at the end of the trip. Why, when we

landed at Naples, one of the Dryden sisters remarked how nice it would be if we all were to stop at the same hotel. I got out of that, however, by stating that I was going to put up in one of the small towns near Pompeii."

"I see you don't hesitate telling a lie, when cornered."

"No; I regard it as preferable to rudeness which, otherwise, I would have had to employ. A prevarication like that, I class with other conventional lies of humanity."

They had arrived at a cross path which led to town and were soon at the Pagano.

At dinner Oldfield and Brush conversed about mutual friends, their plans and ambitions and, later, listened to a concert *al fresco*. From this, however, they were forced to fly precipitately when Brush was recognized by a couple of men in the audience as the American of the lost wallet.

Early next morning they drove up the rock-hewn road to Anacapri where the family Tosetti was easily located. The old man was absent, but mother Tosetti was found busy with her housework. She dropped everything at the appearance of the visitors, wiped her hands in her blue apron, and conducted them to the little garden behind the house.

There they saw Carmelina, a kerchief gracefully draped on her head, busy among the flowers and vegetables.

"Carmelina—Carmelina, *mia*," cried the old woman, "see who is here; quick. Oh, the honor, *eccellenza.*" She made an ineffectual attempt to kiss Brush's sleeve.

Carmelina came to meet them. She looked clean and charming, as on the day before, in spite of her weekday attire which, here and there, showed neat patches. A large bunch of scarlet carnations, which she carried, formed a picturesque contrast to the diaphanous skin of her bare throat. Her arms, also uncovered, were finely molded and the delicate neck invited comparison with a slender column of blue-veined antique marble.

"Ah, signor," she greeted Brush naively, "do you know that I dreamed of you last night?"

"You did, Carmelina? And was it a pleasant dream?"

"*Si, si!* I dreamed that you were up in a tree and were shaking the branches which were full of yellow gold pieces. I stood below, and they just dropped into my apron until it was full."

"Indeed?"

"I suppose you would have preferred a little more idealism in her dream about you, Bob—eh?" jested Oldfield in English.

"That depends on how one interprets the dream. You have remained the same old materialist who perceives only the prosaic side of things. Don't you

see that she made me play Jupiter to her Danaë? What more could I ask?"

"Well, it's a good way of looking at it, but it's stretching imagination somewhat," laughed Oldfield.

Carmelina seemed embarassed during this bit of dialogue of which she did not understand a word. She looked shyly from one of her visitors to the other, then said: "You shouldn't make fun of a poor girl, signor; for that is what you did, I suppose, in your horrid *Inglese.*"

"No, no, Carmelina," protested Brush fervently. "We didn't. It wasn't that at all."

"*E bene,* I will believe you." She fingered the long stems of her flowers and buried her face in the fragrant petals.

"Why don't you offer the gentlemen some of the carnations, you little stupid?" gently scolded mother Tosetti. "You stand there as if you couldn't count ten."

"I was just going to offer them, *madre mia.*" She divided the blossoms in two parts and handed one to each of the men with the artless grace of a child of nature.

"Will the gentlemen condescend to accept a glass of wine in the house?" invited the old woman.

"With pleasure and thanks; but not in the house, if you please. It is too nice out here in the garden."

Carmelina led the way toward a vine-clad arbor where they seated themselves on two rough benches,

beside a rustic table. Mother Tosetti disappeared into the house.

"It was very kind of you to come and see us," stammered the girl, confused under the admiring glance of Brush who had seated himself opposite her.

"That may be so, as far as my friend is concerned," he replied with a frank smile. "I, myself, had a selfish motive in coming, I must confess."

"I can hardly believe that of such a generous man as you are."

"Still it is so. Do you know, Carmelina, what a painter, an artist is?" he asked after a pause.

"How shouldn't I, when there are so many in Capri, running loose. Why, one of them asked me only last month on the street to let him paint my picture."

"And did you?"

"No; I ran away. I was afraid of that *pittore* with his broad hat, long hair and tousled beard."

"Would you be afraid of me too, if I asked you for the same favor?"

"Why, you are not a *pittore*—are you?"

"I am, Carmelina."

"*Santa Madonna!* You looked like a gentleman to me."

Oldfield and Brush broke into a hearty peal of laughter at the artlessness of the remark and were

still roaring when mother Tosetti appeared with a bottle of wine and glasses.

Carmelina, not suspecting the cause of their mirth, became confused once more and gazed into her apron, the ends of which she twisted with her fingers.

"Seriously, Carmelina," began Brush when he had somewhat subsided, "I am an artist, and would like to have you pose for me."

"Oh, mother, what do you think of that? The signor—this one—" She pointed with a giggle to Brush.

"My name is Brush. This is Mr. Oldfield," interrupted the former. "We have neglected to tell you our names."

"How funny they sound. I could hardly pronounce them. What I was going to say, mother,—the signor here is a *pittore*. Would you have thought that of him? And he wants to paint my picture. Isn't that what he means?" She turned to Oldfield who sat beside her.

"I think so," answered the latter abstractedly, who was on the point of tasting his wine, and whose eyes had wandered over toward the summit of Monte Solaro, "but my friend can explain that better."

"There is not much to explain for the moment. I want Carmelina for a model,"—this to the mother —"and I am willing to pay her well for the work

since she would have to come to Naples for the sittings. Will you let her?"

"I have no objections, signor, if she wants to do it."

"Oh, you know I always like to go to the city, mother. But how about father?"

"He will not object either if I take him in hand; and Pietro can always go with you."

"I imagine it will be nice. Will you make me pretty, Signor—eh—Brotchi?"

"I will try to do you justice. But don't get married meanwhile, girl. I heard something to that effect, if I am not mistaken," he added teasingly.

"That is quite possible, signor," chuckled mother Tosetti, "since she's got a nice little dot now."

"Oh, mother, you know I haven't even had an *amoroso* yet," protested Carmelina blushing.

"A girl, like Carmelina, shouldn't need a dot," retorted Brush. "In America she could get a husband for every finger of her hand without a soldo to her name."

"You are joking," replied the old woman doubtingly. "I have heard lots of improbable things about America, but this is the most impossible of all. A girl to marry without a dot! Why, not even a beggar would take her here."

"Nevertheless it is so, *contadina*, but we will not debate that now. I see my friend is getting impatient. We must go."

Oldfield had risen and was bending over a flower bed.

"*A rivederci!* I will let you know, Carmelina, when I want you."

"*A rivederla!*" The women accompanied their visitors to the street where a number of neighbors had gathered around the carriage. They were discussing who the strangers might be, some guessing rightly that it must be the rich American who had made Carmelina's fortune. To the great relief of Brush, they remained undemonstrative, and only a few children ran beside the carriage, as it started, to clamor for pennies.

That day the two friends stayed in Capri, but found it impossible to enjoy their sojourn on the island any longer. They had become the object of an annoying curiosity and attention, and were followed by small crowds whenever they left the Pagano, or showed themselves in public places.

"I know now how it feels to be a millionaire," laughed Brush, after they had run the last gauntlet on the way to the boat, "but should I ever become a real plutocrat, I will take good care not to let it be known in Naples and Capri."

III

THE CAMEO

They were talking about the Silver Treasure of Bosco Reale, as they leisurely strolled along the sun-baked, dusty road which leads from that village to Pompeii.

Oldfield had waxed enthusiastic in the description of the unique find which had been unearthed from the ground they were trodding and had found its way to the collections of the Louvre. Brush displayed hardly less enthusiasm on the subject. Discussing it they had entered into an argument about the Italian interdict relating to the exportation of antiques and old objects of art, when Brush, wiping his forehead, remarked:

"It's too warm to argue the question here on the road. What do you say, John, to a little rest at the next *osteria?*"

"I am agreeable. Do you know of one near by?"

"No; but I see a fellow over there who can probably direct us to the nearest one." He called Oldfield's attention to a man, a short distance ahead of

them, who was sitting in the shade of a tree, close by the road.

As they drew nearer, Brush's artistic eye was attracted by the unusually handsome features of the young fellow. They were shaded by a broad-brimmed hat which intensified their swarthiness, but did not conceal the somber flame of a pair of melancholy eyes. His costume, too, was a picturesque *mélange* of city and country garb.

In the grass, next to him, lay an old double-barreled shotgun and an empty hunting bag of gray canvas. It being late in the afternoon this pointed to poor hunters' luck and, perhaps, explained the discontent expressed in his face.

As Brush and Oldfield stepped in front of him, they noticed that he was, apparently, examining a small object between his fingers. When addressed he closed his palm around it and raised his hat with a polite *"buon giorno."* In reply to Oldfield's question he pointed to a low building back of the road and about a quarter of a mile ahead.

"You can get some good Marsala there," he added. "Old Galubardi always keeps a fine drop on hand for gentlemen."

"Which you, too, no doubt, taste occasionally, since you can recommend it."

"Oh, no, signor. That brand of Father Galubardi's is too expensive for poor people."

"I see you had bad luck today," observed Brush, pointing to the empty hunting bag.

"*Per dio!* Not a hare in sight all day long; and I have been out since early in the morning. However, I have found something else which may be worth more than a dozen hares."

"What is it?" inquired Oldfield, prompted by the curiosity of the archaeologist.

"I don't know exactly. It seems to be a carved stone or something of the sort. Perhaps you would know more about it than I do."

"Could I see it?"

The young fellow opened his palm and handed the object, a flat oval stone, to Oldfield, who threw an eager glance at it. Then he drew his handkerchief and rubbed the loose dirt from its surface. Suddenly his eyes lit up with a poorly disguised expression of intense surprise. The hand which held the stone trembled with excitement. Slowly and carefully he wiped some more dirt away and brought it nearer to his eyes for closer scrutiny.

Brush remarked the deep interest which, for a moment, had illuminated Oldfield's features, and threw a furtive glance at the Italian. The latter's face betrayed an intelligence rather above the station of life indicated by his garb and general appearance.

He watched Oldfield with attention, evidently expecting from him an explanation as to the nature and

value of his find. The latter, however, either accidentally or by device, had made a half turn, and the momentary surprise, mirrored in his eyes, escaped the searching glance of the young native. Neither had he remarked the trembling of the hand which held the found object.

Oldfield now drew his pocket knife and began to scratch away some of the hard incrustation which covered the stone and hid the original surface. He did this with infinite care, as Brush could see leaning over his shoulder. The interest of the latter had, naturally, been aroused by his observation of Oldfield, but he, too, strove to appear unconcerned.

The stone was oval and of yellowish brown. Centuries of burial in the ground had deposited all over it an accumulation of hard dirt. In spite of this, its dim lustre was such as to leave hardly a doubt of its being a precious or semi-precious stone. It was more than two inches in length and bore, apparently, some image in relief.

"Anything unusual?" asked Brush.

Oldfield did not answer, but kept on carefully wiping and scraping. His face had been flushed before by the heat of the afternoon sun, but now his ruddiness was deepened with suppressed excitement. A drop or two of perspiration stood on his forehead, and he nervously bit his lips. At last he seemed to regain his composure. He stopped his work and turned to the owner of the stone.

"Where did you find this pretty pebble?" he asked with assumed indifference.

"Is it only a pebble?" There was a tone of disappointment in the young fellow's voice. "I thought I saw some carving under the dirt."

"There is an image of some kind represented, but it's pretty nearly destroyed. Where did you say you found it?"

"Over there, in one of the shallow fissures caused by the draught." He pointed over his shoulder in the direction of Bosco Reale and reached for his find.

Oldfield hesitated for a moment. Then he returned the stone to him with a gesture of perfect indifference.

The Italian, after a short glance at it, put it into his pocket. "I thought it might have some value," he remarked regretfully.

"Perhaps a lira or two as a toy," suggested Oldfield.

Brush did not participate in the dialogue, but listened with some astonishment.

"Well, John," he now queried curiously, "how about the stone? Is it really worthless?"

"Hush!" exclaimed Oldfield. "I am not certain. Neither could I tell you all I think at this time, though the fellow surely does not understand English. I have an idea that the patina may conceal an object of art, but I dare not express it for fear of

arousing his cupidity. Such luck never happens to one who can appreciate it. I want the stone, however, badly and must get it from him."

"That shouldn't be a difficult matter. I am sure he will gladly sell it if you make him a good offer."

"Good offer! What the devil is a good offer? He doesn't know whether it is a piece of glass, a precious stone, or a pebble that he found. If I offer him a good price he will get suspicious and refuse to sell. I am bound, however, to get this find, and the fellow must sell it to me as an object of little or no value."

"Why don't you make a bid?"

"It would seem odd to him, at best, if I should do so now. You'd better ask him to let you see it again."

"May I take another look at your stone, *amico?*" asked Brush in compliance with the request.

The Italian handed the stone to him without a word. He examined it for a couple of minutes and then allowed Oldfield, once more, to take it. The latter, in pursuance of his policy, hardly glanced at it and threw it playfully from one hand into the other.

"A nice plaything," he remarked. "How much do you want for it, Beppo?"

"I am not called Beppo, signor," the young fellow protested with a show of resentment. "My

name is Paolo Aratta, and I live in Torre Annunziata."

"Well, Paolo, how much do you want for your stone?"

"I don't know whether I really ought to sell it without asking my godfather Palestra. He is a smart man and the stone may be valuable after all. It is certainly very old—perhaps a thousand years or more."

"Perhaps; and perhaps it is only fifteen or twenty years old. Who can tell? Neither your godfather nor I. It is all a chance—guess work. And then I would have no time to wait until you consult him. Here is a nice new ten-lira piece—will you take it?" He drew the small gold piece from his pocket and threw it on the empty bag at Paolo's side.

The latter looked at the coin with shining eyes, but made no move to take it. His dark, lustrous glance slowly wandered from the bag to Oldfield's face.

"Ten liras," he murmured; "it is nice money, but —but who knows? May be the stone is worth a hundred, a thousand liras." Then louder: "There are many valuable things found in this neighborhood. Only last year Giuseppe Carlucci of Bosco Reale plowed up a bracelet for which the people in the museum in Naples gave him three hundred liras. True, it was gold."

"There you have it. It was gold; but this is a

stone, a dirty stone only, which may have no value at all. It is just a fancy of mine to want it. Well, here is another lira *per maccaron* and, now, you may take it or leave it."

Paolo hesitated. He looked alternately at the two yellow and white coins on his bag and at Oldfield. Then he raised himself from the ground. With his deep velvety eyes still expressing suspicion he gazed into the latters face.

"Are you sure," he pleaded, "that my stone is not a find of great value; that it is not worth a great deal more than you give me for it?"

Oldfield winced slightly under this gaze and the direct question, but soon regained his composure. With a gesture of indignation he snarled, as he rapidly walked away with the stone: "Nothing is sure. I am taking my chances. You must take yours."

Brush followed him at a slower gait and, after a while, looked back at Paolo. His lithe, graceful figure was sharply outlined against the background. He stood gazing after them, as if rooted to the ground. His arms had dropped listlessly to his sides and, apparently, he had not yet touched the money.

Around a bend of the road Oldfield waited for Brush and they walked silently next to each other until they had nearly reached the *osteria* Galubardi.

Brush pondered over the unconquerable passion

of the scientist which could induce a man, like John Oldfield, to resort to questionable means in order to gain a cherished object. Otherwise of undoubted probity, he had certainly taken advantage of Paolo's ignorance by purchasing—but had he even purchased the stone? It seemed to Brush that the transaction, to say the least, was a doubtful one. The sale had, so to say, been forced on the man.

Suddenly Oldfield blurted out vehemently: "Spit it out, Bob! I know what you are thinking: I am a scoundrel, a swindler, a confidence man, anything of that sort. I have cheated this poor Italian out of a rich prize. I have robbed him. But let me tell you, I don't feel that way about it. My conscience will not trouble me a minute for having, possibly, acquired an archæological treasure at a cheap price from a fellow in whose hands it was not safe. Pearls are not made for swine. Who knows what he would have done with it? He—"

"But, John," Brush tried to break in.

"—He may have thrown it away," Oldfield continued without paying attention to the interruption. "And if I had offered him a larger sum, he would have, immediately, become suspicious. He would have insisted on consulting his godfather, his uncles and aunts and, the Lord only knows whom else. Perhaps the find would have been picked up by some shrewd dealer, or it would have been submitted to the museum authorities in Naples? You heard him

refer to them. In that case, I would never have had a chance of getting it. One doesn't get such chances every day. It was in the interest of science and art that I saved it for myself and, incidentally, for America. Not for gain, for I shall certainly not sell it, and—"

"But, John," interrupted Brush again, "there is a moral—"

"There is no 'but'," Oldfield cut him short once more. "My conscience is absolutely clear on the subject. The jewel, if it proves such, will not go out of my hands. All the benefit I will derive of it, will be the pleasure of contemplating its beauty in the solitude of my study. Maybe I'll show it occasionally to an appreciative connoisseur. Ah, what a rare treasure it may turn out to be."

"It must be if it can demoralize a man of your stamp. But you have not told me yet what the stone is."

"I cannot give you the exact information until I have thoroughly removed all the patina. This will take some time and care. But that it is a Roman cameo of decided art value, I am almost positive." And Oldfield uttered a low chuckle of contentment, while caressing with his fingers the stone in his pocket.

They had, meanwhile, arrived at the door of the *osteria.* Father Galubardi himself stood in it, and they were soon seated in the shade of a *pergola* at

the side of the house behind a bottle of his famous Marsala.

"To return to the stone," said Brush, starting the argument again, "you are, perhaps, not aware that in buying an antique of value you are not acquiring with it the right of exportation. Have you heard of the Pacca law which forbids the removal of such objects from the country? We were speaking about this subject just before we met the young Italian."

"I am glad you mention it again," retorted Oldfield. "It will give me a chance to enlighten you on my views about the matter. In first line, as a foreigner, I do not consider the interdict binding on me. Secondly, the law in itself is an absurdity, an abortion of justice."

"It seems to me, however," contended Brush, "that the government was perfectly justified in having a law of that sort enacted."

"I deny it absolutely."

"You see, what forms the main attraction of Italy to the student and tourist is the plethora of fine art treasures conserved in the museums and galleries of the kingdom. Take them, or part of them, away and the magnetism of the country loses considerably in power. Italy being—"

"I know what you want to say," interrupted Oldfield impetuously. "It's the old stock argument about the country being poor and needing the income from that source, and so forth. Now, you know as

well as I do that the law in question was not made to protect the public institutions. They are perfectly safe against the piracy—as you call it—of collectors like Pierpont Morgan, and there are enough of them to attract the world at large for all ages to come. It is the private—"

"You did not allow me to finish, my boy," objected Brush. "I am well aware that the act is principally directed against the many private collections, the owners of which are often impoverished and forced to sell part or all of their inherited art works. These collections, however, are so numerous and, frequently, of such importance that they partake of a public character, and ought to stay in their present places."

"I grant that there is some logic in that argument. Nevertheless, as an American, you should agree with me that to interfere with a man's privilege to dispose of his private property, as he sees fit, is an intrusion on his constitutional rights and his freedom of action. You certainly would resent it, were you affected."

"The government, however, while holding in a way title thereto, does not forbid the sale of that class of art works under certain conditions. It only prohibits their clandestine exportation," insisted Brush.

"True, but it also arrogates to itself the priority of the right to purchase and the naming of the price

at which it will buy. It will offer, perhaps, for a masterpiece by Raphael or Correggio fifty or a hundred thousand liras, when a foreign connoisseur would willingly bid half a million."

"But an owner is free to refuse a government offer, and can sell to another Italian purchaser."

"Where should he find one? There is no art-loving plutocracy here, and you will admit that the Italian aristocrats of to-day are too poor to follow in this respect the example of their ancestors, unless a few more of them succeed in regilding their armorial bearings by marrying rich American girls."

"Well, that would be one way of solving the question," admitted Brush, laughing, "but I hope that our heiresses will, at last, take to heart the bitter lessons which the majority of these marriages have taught."

"At any rate, I maintain that a man should have the right to sell what belongs to him to whomever he likes, and take what he buys wherever he pleases without interference of an altogether too patriarchal government. As it is, governments did not always take this position. They were sometimes stealing are treasures themselves. *Vide* Elgin Marbles in the British Museum."

"A different proposition altogether, John. But I perceive I cannot get you to see the affair in my light. You scientists and collectors have to be

measured by another moral standard than the rest of us."

"Not at all; especially not in this case. Here is a man who finds an object. He cannot return it to the loser, who, probably, has been dead for the last fifteen hundred or two thousand years. By the law of common sense he becomes the owner. This gives him the right to dispose of it. I, being a free citizen, have an indisputable privilege to purchase and take it wherever I please. *Capisce,* Bob?"

Brush didn't answer. He looked thoughtfully into his glass. "Let's go," he suggested after a while; "it's rather late, and there is only one more train to the city."

They emptied their glasses, and Father Galubardi bowed them out of the *osteria.* Getting into the road, they passed Paolo Aratta who turned toward the inn. His head was bowed low and he seemed to be lost in his thoughts. He did not appear to see them.

"Addio, amico," Brush called pleasantly to him.

Paolo stopped a moment and looked up, but did not return the greeting. Then he continued his way toward the inn.

"There is a fellow who is going to get gloriously drunk," remarked Oldfield. "I bet, it is not often that he has eleven liras in his pocket."

They reached the railway station near the Hotel Diomed just in time to catch the train for Naples.

During the short trip they did not speak any more of the stone. Once or twice Oldfield pulled it from his pocket to admire it in the waning light. Brush smoked his pipe and looked out of the window.

IV

CICERONE AND MACCARONI

Before arriving in Naples Brush accepted an invitation to dine with Oldfield. Later he accompanied him to a chemist and to several *droguerias* in search of information as to the best method of removing patina from an antique object. Oldfield purchased various acids and small utensils, and Brush returned with him to his hotel where he immediately started to work on the stone.

The task was slow and tedious. Shortly after midnight the artist tired of watching the operation and returned to his own rooms on the top floor of a modern house in the Via Umberto. The apartment consisted of a furnished studio, a bedroom and a small *salon* which he had rented from an Italian artist who had gone to Paris for several months.

On the following morning Brush was finishing his toilette, preparatory to going out for breakfast, when a uniformed boy from the Hotel de Londres brought him a note from Oldfield. It requested him to come over in the course of the forenoon, if his work permitted him to do so.

He breakfasted in a *café* of the Galleria Umberto, looked over the "Corriere di Napoli" and then strolled across the Piazza Municipio to Oldfield's hotel.

When he entered his room, Oldfield stood near the window holding a glittering object in his hand. He looked tired and had, evidently, not been to bed. At Brush's appearance he rushed at him and dragged him towards the light.

"Here—here—what did I tell you, old man," he burst out jubilantly, thrusting the stone into his hand. "It is a unique treasure, the most valuable cameo in the world."

In fact, the jewel, freed from all foreign adhesions, lay in Brush's palm, a scintillating, lustrous oval of yellow fire, the most magnificent topaz he had ever seen. The marvelously carved bust of a woman with ancient Roman coiffure adorned its slightly convex surface, and the intaglio inscription along its edge was plainly legible.

DIVA MESSALINA AVGVSTA

read Brush in an undertone which was not free from emotion, as he realized that he held in his hand a priceless cameo, representing the licentious consort of Claudius Caesar. Without doubt, it was a contemporaneous carving, although in a perfect state of preservation.

"Yes, yes, Messalina herself," broke in Oldfield enthusiastically. "And in all probability the jewel was used for her personal adornment; for who, but an empress, could afford to wear an object of such value. I don't mean the intrinsic worth of the stone alone. Look at the work; scrutinize it carefully, and it will dawn even on you, ignorant barbarian, that it is a masterpiece. It represents the perfection of Roman lapidary art, and the Romans—let me tell you, Bob—were no mean adepts in it."

"And you intend to hide this treasure from the world at large?" Brush queried reproachfully. The fleeting image of Paolo Aratta, its rightful owner, standing motionless at the spot where they had met him first, passed his mind as he posed the question.

Oldfield pondered a minute. "From the world at large, yes," he replied at last slowly and impressively. "But to any lover of the antique, the beautiful—as I have told you before—I will ever be happy to show it. Maybe, too," this smilingly, "if I ever should love and marry a woman, I will allow her to adorn herself with it." He took the stone from Brush's hand and looked at it caressingly. Then he wrapped it in soft cotton and a piece of chamois skin and slid it into his pocket.

"Are you busy this morning, Bob?" he queried during the procedure.

"I was going to finish a little aquarelle. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I thought if you had time I'd like to have you go with me to the *Museo Nazionale* to compare the cameo with the best ones there."

"If it gives you any pleasure, I am with you. In fact, I am interested enough to see how it compares with those in that collection. They have exquisite ones there, I know."

They walked over to the museum and examined the treasure of cameos, intaglios and other carved stones exhibited in glass cases. Oldfield's judgment appeared correct. There was not a jewel of that character in the collection that could be considered the equal of his.

"Allow me to congratulate you on your acquisition," said Brush after Oldfield had, once more, impressed on him the incomparable beauty of the Cameo of Messalina.

"Thank you. What are we going to do now?"

Brush looked at his watch. "It's hardly worth while to start work before luncheon. I think I'll go to the gallery rooms and revel in the old masters for awhile."

"And I am going to the Pompeiian department to study a little. I'll meet you in an hour in the room where the pastel copy of "The Drinkers," by Velasquez, hangs."

They separated, Brush turning towards the picture gallery and Oldfield in the direction of the department of antiques.

With the delight of a true artist Brush wandered through the gallery of paintings, stopping here and there to admire a Reni, a Carracci or an Andrea del Sarto. He stood several minutes before Titian's voluptuous Danaë and involuntarily thought of Carmelina. Not that the blond rosy-skinned woman on the canvas reminded him of her. Carmelina, with her dark beauty, was the living contrast to this conception of the Venetian master. It was the rain of gold showered by Jupiter into the lap of Danaë that recalled her memory to him, and he smiled at the recollection of her dream and her artlessness.

A few minutes were lacking from the appointed time when Brush entered the room designated by Oldfield. It was quite crowded with visitors, and the latter had not yet arrived.

While waiting, he walked from one easel to the other watching the copying artists and art students, and listening to their dickering with unsophisticated foreign purchasers. Then he studied the various types of tourists with Baedeckers in their hands.

Suddenly he heard a remark behind his back made in a feminine voice and in unmistakable Yankee English. He turned around and noticed two women and a man standing before a painting by Guido Reni, representing the four seasons. Their backs were turned to him. One of the women must have uttered the remark which caused him to turn and smile. "Doesn't this picture remind you of one just

like it that we saw last year in the Pinakothek in Florence," she had said.

The remark recalled to Brush Oldfield's philippic on the lookout of the Salto di Tiberio about a certain class of American travelers. "I guess John is right," he thought. There are a lot of fools traveling and they do make us ridiculous."

The man escorting the two women now called their attention to the easel of an artist on which stood a nearly completed copy of the Guido Reni.

"Isn't it lovely!" exclaimed one of them. "And it's all free hand painting too. I wonder how long it took him to do it?"

"Why don't you ask him, sis?"

"You know I can't speak Italian. Try him in English, Mr. Stickney."

"Seems to me, I heard this name somewhere," murmured Brush who still had obtained only a rear view of the group.

The portly-looking man leaned over the artist's shoulder. "How much time?" he asked, pointing to his canvas.

"One hundered dollar—five hundered liras," the painter eagerly replied in broken English. "You lika buy?"

"No, no! I mean time. How much time did you spend on it?"

"Time? No giva time—cash."

The artist had evidently arrived at the limit of

his English, for, with an inviting smile at his interlocutor, he repeated, emphasizing with the fingers of his hand: "One hundered dollar—five hundered liras Italian mon."

"I don't want to buy it, mister. I want to—but what's the use of talking to him?" Mr. Stickney turned around and noticing Brush near by addressed him.

"You look like an American, sir, but perhaps you can help me out. Do you speak this Italian lingo?"

"Yes, sir! At least to some extent." With the first glance at the speaker's face, it dawned on Brush that he had Oldfield's steamer companions, the party from which they had fled at the Salto di Tiberio, before him.

"Will you kindly tell this artist here that I don't want to buy his picture. I only want to know how long it took him to paint it."

Brush had no time to comply with the request before the two women, taking a few rapid steps forward, called out: "Why, if it isn't Mr. Oldfield. Isn't it fine to meet you again."

At these exclamations Mr. Stickney, too, turned to greet Oldfield who only partly succeeded in hiding his annoyance behind a forced smile.

Brush didn't try to prevent a malicious twist from appearing on his lips at the discomfiture of his friend.

"Indeed I am pleased to see you," was Oldfield's dry answer to the effusive greetings of the party.

"Didn't I understand you to say that you were going to stay at a country place hereabouts?" remarked the younger Miss Dryden.

"So I am, Miss Carolyn."

"I suppose you just came in to visit the museum like we did? Isn't it grand? Almost as good as the Metropolitan in New York," suggested the elder sister.

"Not exactly, Miss Dryden," was the ambiguous reply; "I am working, studying here. But allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Brush, an artist who is temporarily established here and who will be delighted to have you call at his studio."

Brush bowed with a sickly grin to the ladies and shook hands with Mr. Stickney. "I didn't know I had addressed a friend of Mr. Oldfield," remarked the latter.

"And he will be delighted to play the *cicerone* for you whenever his time will permit," continued Oldfield, repaying Brush's malicious smile with interest.

"I don't know the instrument," said Miss Carolyn, "but we do love music and will certainly be charmed to hear your friend play it."

Oldfield and Brush bit their lips in a strong effort to conceal their mirth.

"Indeed we will," added Miss Dryden.

"What are you, gentlemen going to do now?" asked Stickney with a glance at his watch.

"Nothing in special," rejoined Brush. "We were going to lunch."

"That's just what I wanted to suggest. Let's go out together. There is a nice little place near here where we had lunch yesterday. They've got the finest spaghetti and *maccaroni* you ever tasted. The genuine thing too; with tomatoes, garlic and grated cheese."

"Oh, do come," pleaded the Misses Dryden.

There was no way out of the trap into which they had fallen, and Oldfield and Brush, looking ruefully at each other, assented to the proposition.

The little *trattoria* to which Stickney took the party was typically Neapolitan. It was evidently not much frequented by strangers, as the entrance of the Americans seemed to be generally noticed.

The proprietor conducted them to a table and presented the menu. Stickney motioned him away and pointed to another waiter. "Send us that fellow over there. He understands some English and he waited on us yesterday."

"That is hardly necessary," observed Oldfield. "Brush or I can interpret the bill of fare."

"How very inquisitive and fresh these natives are," scowled Miss Dryden after the order had been given. "They almost stare you out of countenance."

"They don't mean anything by it. It is a habit

they have," stated Brush soothingly. "Neapolitans, as a rule, are harmless and polite."

"How long have you been living in Italy, Mr. Brush?" inquired Miss Carolyn.

"For several years; mostly in Rome, but I know Naples too fairly well."

"I am told there is much poverty here, but the people are said to be very proud."

"Proud? Perhaps in a certain way. I could tell you in this connection some things that would make you laugh.

"Do."

"Why, in the house where I am living the second story is occupied by the family of some count or prince and, shortly after I moved in, I noticed with some surprise that their liveried servant, whom I daily met on the stairway, was often carrying a pair of carriage doors up and down. I didn't know what to make of this, but continued observation solved the enigma. I found out that the noble family, in common with two others, owned a landau, and each of them had special carriage doors to this with their own crests painted on them. These doors came in use during the alternate drives of the part owners. Thus they create the belief among their friends that each of them is the proud possessor of a private carriage."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the Dryden girls. "You are joking."

"Sure, he is stringing us," said Stickney.

"No; upon my word."

The waiter now placed a steaming dish of *maccaroni* on the table and filled the plates.

Stickney and the ladies began to cut the long strings with their forks when Oldfield, with fell ulterior motive, remarked: "When you are in Rome, you ought to do as the Romans do. An Italian can in no way recognize a stranger quicker than by the way he eats *maccaroni.*"

"Yes, I have noticed the natives never cut them. They roll 'em up on their forks," assented Mr. Stickney.

"Or on the fingers, as we saw some little boys do," added Miss Dryden.

"You should try it that way," suggested Brush. "I mean on the fork."

"I could never do it," giggled Miss Carolyn.

"I am going to," said Stickney.

Oldfield and Brush proceeded with the help of spoons to wind the soft slippery paste tubes on their forks, and Stickney tried his best to imitate them.

Once or twice he nearly succeeded, but the treacherous *maccaroni* always slipped back into the plate before he had a chance to raise his fork. At last he brought a generous forkfull to the level of his mouth. He was slightly tilting back his head with a view of facilitating the operation, when once more he failed, and the smooth yellow threads, instead of disappearing down his throat, tortuously glided

along his chin and over a glistening shirt bosom into his waistcoat.

Everyone laughed except Miss Dryden and Stickney himself. The former seemed to be much interested in the porous plaster manufacturer, and Brush had several times noticed an exchange of coquettish smiles and significant glances between them.

Miss Dryden's faded grayish-blue eyes only expressed kind solicitude as she handed Stickney a napkin the ends of which she had dipped in water. "If you button up your coat, it will be alright until you get home," she said consolingly.

"The pesky things are harder to handle than my porous plaster," growled Stickney, while trying to efface the yellowish stains the *maccaroni* had left on their downward path over his shirt. "Fortunately they haven't got the sticking quality."

"*A propos* your porous plaster, Mr. Stickney," queried Oldfield with a sly wink at Brush; "did you give up your great idea of using the Rock of Gibraltar as an advertising poster for your goods?"

"I'm afraid I'll have to. I understand the thing is impossible. Those Englishmen are too conservative. They haven't got a bit of gumption about them."

"That's too bad," remarked Brush. "It certainly was an original idea. Worthy of the great Phineas T. Barnum himself."

Stickney smiled self-contentedly. "Well," he replied, "in his day Barnum was about the only pebble on the advertising beach; but now there are others."

During the balance of the meal, Brush noticed with much amusement some little by-play between the plaster manufacturer and Miss Dryden. Miss Carolyn concentrated the fire of her batteries on Oldfield, but found his imperturbability an armor which effectually prevented the opening of a breach.

A little wrangle ensued when the waiter presented the bill. Stickney insisted that, since the invitation to lunch had come from his side, it was his treat, as he expressed it. Oldfield and Brush objected meekly, but had to give way.

As they stood on the sidewalk, Miss Dryden said: "We shall take an afternoon drive out to the Posilipo. Won't you join us?"

"Thank you for the invitation," declined Oldfield politely; "but I, for my part, have to return to the museum. How about you, Bob?"

"I have to work."

"We are sorry; but come and see us at our hotel—do. We are at the Grand."

"Yes, do, gentlemen," added Stickney. "I stop at the same place, and we may go out together some evening for a little fun. I've a guide who knows all the ropes." He hailed a passing vehicle.

"Oh, I almost forgot to ask for your address, Mr.

Brush," exclaimed Miss Carolyn, one foot on the carriage step. We want to see your studio."

"And hear you play your—your—what do you call it? I can never remember these outlandish names." Miss Dryden settled herself in her seat.

"You mean his *cicerone,*" laughed Oldfield. "Yes, you mustn't forget that. He is good at it."

Brush drew a visiting card from his case and ruefully wrote his address on it.

"I play a little on the banjo, myself," called out Stickney, as the carriage drove off. "If you can scare up one, we'll have a little ragtime music at your studio some evening. So 'long!"

"I'd like to punch you for this, John," said Brush, poking Oldfield in the ribs, after the vehicle had disappeared. "The idea of foisting these bores on me. They certainly are the limit."

"Well, you grinned so maliciously when you saw my plight at meeting them, that I had to get even with you."

"You did so with interest. I only hope they will lose my card, or forget their promise."

"Don't deceive yourself. They won't let you wait very long."

"I have a notion to get back at you next time I see them by giving away your address."

"If you do, Bob, I'll murder you."

"Well, you owe me some reparation."

"Come to think of it, I may be in a position to

make amends to you very soon. The *Prinzessin Irene* is due here within a few days. I expect my aunt Emory on her, who is coming over with a Miss Penrose, her ward, to spend some time in Sorrento or some other place around here. I have never seen the young lady, but I understand she is beautiful and charming. I'll introduce you. She ought to outbalance the two old maids."

"She has to, or I will not forgive you. The idea of wanting me to play the *cicerone* for these dried-out Dryden girls and that chump of a porous plaster manufacturer."

V

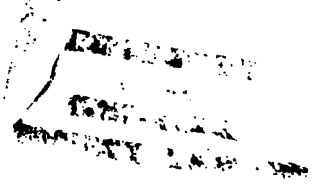
THE ADVENT OF LUCILE

The black nose of the rushing steamer cut the dark water sharply, and the foam dashed angrily against the sides of her bow. In spite of the early hour, many passengers were appearing on the deck of the *Prinzessin Irene.* They had come up from their cabins to witness her entrance into the Bay of Naples at sunrise.

In the semi-obscurity of early dawn, the misty skyline showed purplish-gray. A stiff northerly breeze tore into ragged shreds the dense clouds of smoke which belched from the wide funnels.

Gradually the purplish tint of the horizon changed to a rosy hue. Out of the thin white mist tall Latin sails skimmed into view and were quickly passed by the greyhound of the sea. In the distance, to the right, Capri rose above the hazy skyline like a grotesquely shaped cloud. On the opposite side the bulkier mass of Ischia began to detach itself from the vapory background.

Softly the rose melted into scarlet and gold and



then, as the sun crept up from behind Vesuvius, the sky took on a pale sapphire tint. The breeze was rippling the water of the bay into myriads of wrinkles from which the blazing light was reflected, as from the facets of a diamond, in shades of silver, emerald and peacock blue. In the shadow of floating clouds these tones became a palette of turquois, lapis lazuli and aquamarine.

One after the other smiling Procida, Sorrento, Torre del Greco and the green hill of the Posilipo came in view. The jumbled mass of houses, stretching in the shape of a half moon around the bay, still remained indistinct in the golden haze of the morning sun.

The double summit of Vesuvius, with a thin vapor cloud hanging over the crater, rose majestically in the background, a landmark of that fragment of paradise which "having fallen to earth from heaven, forms the Bay of Naples and its royal shores."

As the *Prinzessin Irene* reached the inner harbor, the sun which, at first, had only gilded the elevated points of Castel San Elmo and San Martino, touched the white buildings at their base, and the bright line which runs uninterruptedly from Posilipo to Portici and Resina became a radiant imperial crescent.

On the promenade deck of the steamer a young lady, in gray, fastened the veil of her traveling hat tighter under the chin as she turned toward her

neighbor. Both ladies had been mutely leaning over the railing, their eyes riveted on the changing vista of land and sea, until the nerve-wrecking noise of the steam winches and the rattle of the anchor chains announced the end of their trip.

"The Neapolitans are right, Mrs. Emory, when they say *'Vedi Napoli e poi muori,'* " she said, her eyes still filled with the dreaminess into which she had fallen.

"I am afraid, Lucile," replied the elderly lady, pushing back the wisps of gray hair which the breeze had blown into her face, "you will have to tell me in good English what the Neapolitans say before I know what that means."

"Literally translated: 'See Naples and then die.' "

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Emory with a humorous twinkle in her eyes, "Is that what they say of their own city? It isn't much of a recommendation."

"Well, it really means that one should see Naples before dying."

"That's different. Now, I propose to see it thoroughly, and then wait a long while yet before parting from this world. But, seriously, from appearances, Naples promises to be beautiful."

"Almost too beautiful not to hide a disillusion. Perhaps we'll be disappointed as—I have been told —people often are in Constantinople and your own Chicago."

"I don't know as to Constantinople, but who was ever disappointed in Chicago?" asked Mrs. Emory with a touch of resentment.

"Why, the great Rudyard Kipling for one."

"How so?"

"Somewhere in his 'American Notes' he says 'I have seen Chicago, and, having seen it, I urgently desire never to see it again.' I don't know whether I quote correctly, but it was to that effect."

"Outrageous! It only shows that even a great man can succeed in making a fool of himself."

"Sometimes it does not take much of an effort either;—but do you think, Mrs. Emory," queried Miss Penrose after a little pause, veering from the subject, "that Mr. Oldfield will be at the dock to meet us?"

"I have no doubt, if he received my letter."

"It's odd, but I am almost afraid to make his acquaintance. Is he really such a bear as I have been told? You always say he is only of a retiring, reserved disposition, but I have heard from others that he is quite a woman hater."

"He is nothing of the sort, Lucile. He is simply wrapped up in his work, that's all; and if he does not care too much for women's society, it is, perhaps, because he imagines that his looks put him at a disadvantage."

"Is he so unattractive?"

"I don't think so. He is no Adonis, to be sure,

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MISS PENROSE WAS STRUCK BY HIS STALWART FIGURE.
— *Page 71.*

but he is athletic, of fine physique, and as to his being a bear, I am positive that, even if he were one, a clever little girl, like you, could easily tame him, if she cared to. Why, there he is."

Mrs. Emory excitedly waved a handkerchief and pointed to a small rowboat which, among the many that were beginning to surround the steamer, tried with difficulty to come closer.

Oldfield, too, had recognized the old lady and waved his hat in return. He shouted some words of welcome, but they were drowned by the noise of peddlers' cries and the songs of Neapolitan minstrels which assailed the steel walls of the *Prinzessin Irene*.

As he stood there in the swaying boat, Miss Penrose was struck by his stalwart figure, but could not distinguish the details of his features. "He looks the former football player," she thought, and then she was addressed by a steward with reference to her trunks.

The decks were now crowded, and piles of baggage were heaped near the accommodation ladder which was guarded by a couple of sailors. At last, the eager passengers were allowed to descend and disembark by means of small craft.

Oldfield had succeeded in getting to the side of the steamer, and assisted Mrs. Emory and Miss Penrose into his boat. Their cabin steward fol-

lowed with the luggage which was taken care of by a *"facchino"* whom Oldfield had brought along.

As they pushed off the *Prinzessin Irene,* he was warmly kissed by his aunt and introduced to the young lady.

"It almost seems to me as though we were old acquaintances, Mr. Oldfield," Miss Penrose greeted him, as she took a seat on the low carpet-covered bench opposite him. "Mrs. Emory has so often spoken of you." She now saw that he had somewhat irregular features, a nose that was not quite classic, but did not find him altogether unattractive.

Oldfield arranged some small hand baggage between his knees, then he looked up and replied: "It's very kind of aunt Clara."

He noticed her deep bluish-gray eyes, and was irresistibly attracted by a light bronze curl which had escaped from under the restraining veil. It was of such rare, beautiful color that he frequently threw a furtive glance at it during the short row to the *dogana,* while receiving family and other news from Mrs. Emory.

At the custom house the formalities were hastened by his diplomatic politeness to the *dogana* officials and his knowledge of Italian, and they soon strolled slowly up the Strada de Piliero towards the hotel, preferring to walk the short distance.

"You speak the language quite fluently," remarked Miss Penrose on the way. "I wish I could

do as well, but then I have studied it only a few months. Did it take you long to learn it?"

"Quite a while. You, perhaps, don't know that, three years ago, I stayed in Rome for many months."

"Yes, I do. In fact, I know a good deal more about you than you may suspect, Mr. Oldfield," she replied coquettishly. "I heard, for instance, all about your indifference, to use a mild expression, about us poor girls, and I know a good deal too about your work in which, by the way, I am much interested."

"Ah, you are? It is rather unusual that young ladies should care for archaeology." He preferred to ignore the first part of her remark.

"Not any more so than that a young man should be so wrapped up in it as to become indifferent to the pleasures of society. Am I right, Mrs. Emory?"

"I believe so," assented the old lady.

"And who told you that I am?" he demanded somewhat nettled.

"Oh, some friends who claim to know you well." She noticed the slight ruffle in his tone and veered to another subject. "Ah, the picturesque group," she exclaimed, calling his attention to several natives standing at the corner of the Strada di Porto.

"If you'd get a little deeper into this narrow cañon, you could see more interesting ones than that. I observe that you have an eye for the picturesque."

"I love it. Indeed my friends tease me about it. They also call me sometimes romantic."

"I have an idea that you and my friend Brush will be in sympathy with each other."

"Who is he?"

"A young American artist living in Rome. He is, at present, here in Naples and may lunch with us this noon."

"Is it Robert Brush you are referring to?" interposed Mrs. Emory.

"Yes, aunt Clara."

"You wrote me about him several years ago, I believe. I know some of his family and remember him, too, as a little boy. How is he doing?"

"Exceedingly well. He has exhibited successfully at the *Salon* and has been awarded a couple of prizes."

"I am glad to hear it. He comes from good old stock."

They had arrived at the hotel where the *facchino,* his handcart heaped with their luggage, was already awaiting them.

The arrangement for apartments was soon concluded and the ladies retired to get out of their traveling robes. Their suite consisted of a little *salon* on the second floor, which separated the two bedrooms, and an adjoining cabinet for a maid yet to be engaged. The first three pieces faced the Piazza

Municipio and offered a fine view of the pulsating life of that public square.

Miss Penrose was the first to emerge from her room. She stepped to the *salon* window and watched with interest the passers-by and the small cabs chasing to and fro after fares. She had just waved one of these away, an importunate fellow who had solicited her by a cracking of his whip and a shout of *"Vettura, signorina, vettura?"* when Mrs. Emory entered with a request of assistance in adjusting some hooks of her waist.

While Miss Penrose occupied herself with this the old lady inquired, apparently in a casual way, as to the impression Oldfield had made on her.

"I am rather agreeably disappointed," she replied. "From all descriptions, except yours, Mrs. Emory, I expected to find sort of an ogre ready to eat up every poor little girl who inadvertently comes within his reach—not for love, I mean."

"Sort of a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour?" smiled the old lady.

"No, not exactly that. But in all seriousness, I hope Mr. Oldfield will prove sociable. You know I like to be entertained and have a good time, and one cannot always talk on archæology and kindred subjects."

"Well, Lucile, since you will necessarily be thrown much in John's society, remember that there is no better way for a young lady to interest a man

than by showing some sympathy with his work, ambition or hobby. It's different after marriage. Then, to keep him captive, he also must be fed—well fed."

"I have heard something to that effect. But I don't know as yet whether I care to interest him at all," remonstrated Miss Penrose.

"Well, I didn't mean to insinuate anything. It was only general advice that I meant to give you, although I don't deny that I would like to see you and John become good friends. You are the only beings near to me."

"There is nothing I wish more. You are aware that I am sincerely interested in his occupation, at least in the romantic side of it. The science is a little too deep for me."

"I confess it does not interest me at all. But come Lucile, John will be waiting."

They descended and found Oldfield in the lobby.

He could not repress a feeling of admiration, as he caught sight of the graceful, lithe figure of the young woman coming down stairs, supporting the older one under the arm. He remarked her shapely foot and ankle; and the hair, which had been so jealously hidden before by a thick veil, revealed now, under a large plumed hat, more of its glory.

Miss Penrose possessed a beauty of almost too classical regularity, but her hair was its crowning feature. It was of the color one sees in the light

bronze of ancient Roman coins, with tints of bright gold in the highlights and tones of burnt sienna and Venetian red in the shadows. Her little head was almost weighted down under this silky burden, the rebelliousness of which had forced her to acquire a habit of pushing it back of her cheeks and temples every few minutes.

"Shall we take a little walk?" proposed Oldfield. "It is quite early. We have plenty of time until luncheon."

The ladies cheerfully assented.

"I suppose you are not much of a walker, aunt Clara," he remarked as they stepped out of the hotel, "but I'll only take you over to the Via Roma, Naples's Broadway or State Street. It'll do your heart good, after ten or eleven days of enforced renunciation, to delight in the attractive things in the show windows. Am I right, Miss Penrose?"

"As far as I am concerned, you are," she agreed. "But you betray quite a knowledge of feminine weaknesses which one would not suspect in you, Mr. Oldfield."

"Well, I have heard it once said that a woman never gets too old to take interest in dresses and all things of personal adornment. However," he added gallantly, "aunt Clara is still quite a young woman."

"You are a gay flatterer, John; a considerable

change in you since last I saw you at home. I wonder what caused it?"

"It's probably some bacteria in the air, auntie. You know the Neapolitans are so awfully polite and gallant."

He, himself, was wondering at the inexplicable feeling of gayety he experienced at the moment, and for which he could find no plausible reason. In his deficient knowledge of the sex and its ways, he was far from suspecting the subtle inspiring influence exercised on any man of finer fibre by the mere presence of a beautiful woman. Goethe's aphorism "The intercourse with noble women ennobles man" was not unknown to him, but he had, so far, little chance to have its truth proven to him. Not that, since his manhood, he had lacked the opportunity, but he had always rather avoided than sought it.

Having lost his mother early, and being an only child, he had been brought up without the companionship of girls, and, though he had not given much thought to it, he had looked forward to the announced arrival of his aunt and her ward with some misgivings. He had been especially afraid of being hampered in his work by their presence and of being compelled to pay to a young woman attentions that were obnoxious to him. He was astonished, therefore, to find now that, somehow or other, the idea of being with them for a protracted period seemed no longer repulsive to him.

The famous ancient street, the "Toledo" of olden times, proved so attractive to the ladies that Oldfield barely succeeded in getting them away from the proverbially persuasive Neapolitan storekeepers and their shops. They found so many odd and pretty things to purchase there that, not being provided with sufficient Italian currency, they had to resort to his purse.

"They do not have our imposing Chicago and New York show windows here," remarked Mrs. Emory, as they walked down the street, "and as to the taste of dressing them attractively, where is that celebrated foreign sense of art they talk so much about? I fail to see it."

"True," replied Oldfield; "not even in Paris do they have such an artistic display of goods in the show windows as one may see in the large American cities."

In their perambulations they had arrived near the Palazzo Reale and the Theater San Carlo and then turned toward the *quai* of Santa Lucia.

The sight of the steep narrow streets, or rather lanes, opening on to it, many of which were nothing but long flights of stairs, interrupted occasionally by short landings, made Mrs. Emory almost gape with astonishment. The white and colored pieces of linen hanging from the windows, and the washlines, filled with freshly laundered clothes, which were stretched at all stories from house to house across the street,

made her, at first glance, think that they were decorations in celebration of some event.

Miss Penrose was specially attracted by the throngs of natives in these alleys which surged in and out like bees around a hive. The dark beauty of the dirty children, the lustrous eyes of the men and women, and the gay colors of their costumes amidst the strange setting appealed to her strongly developed sense of the artistic and picturesque.

"Let's go in there," she pleaded. "I'd just love to observe their ways and doings a little closer."

"I am afraid you'll be rather shocked," warned Oldfield. "But, at any rate, you probably have a perfumed handkerchief with you."

Mrs. Emory was anything but enthusiastic at the idea of penetrating into the squalid quarters, but yielded to Miss Penrose's entreaties.

A strong smell, an effluvium of human perspiration, decaying vegetable matter and cooking odors, among which that of garlic was predominant, assailed their olfactory nerves before they had far advanced into one of these maelstroms of Neapolitan poverty. It emanated from every door and window, all of which were open and permitted a view into the houses and the intimacy of the home life therein.

Men, pursuing their vocations in front of the doors, half naked children and old women in all stages of dress and undress, busy in performance of

their household duties, could be seen everywhere. Some girls were combing each other's hair, getting the raven tresses into the characteristic coiffure affected by the *senza capella;* other women were sitting on the thresholds performing the same service on the tously heads of their offspring, incidentally relieving them of pestering parasites.

Poverty was apparent everywhere, but the joyous sounds of rollicking Neapolitan airs seemed to belie the fact; and the little boys, rolling *maccaroni* around their fingers and skillfully allowing them to slip down their gullets, looked as happy as if their squalid homes had been in Arcadia.

"No wonder, John," remarked Mrs. Emory, "so many of them come to America to escape this frightful condition of human existence."

"And still, the real children of sunny Naples never feel happy there. They stay long enough to amass a little competency and then they return to this place which grants them the only unalloyed bliss they know. The assurance of a place to sleep, a little sunshine during the day, a dish of *maccaroni* and a few soldi to jingle in their pockets is generally the height of their aspiration."

"Withal they are a handsome race," observed Miss Penrose, "and there are types to be found here that should form the delight of your friend, Mr. Brush."

"That is true; and you can find him frequently

here hunting for models. This reminds me, though, that it is about time to return to the hotel. He may be waiting for me."

They turned back to the *quai*. Oldfield hailed a cab and gave the driver his directions.

As they crossed the Piazza Municipio, he pointed out to the ladies Brush who strolled leisurely toward the same place.

VI

PAOLO ARATTA

The afternoon was fairly advanced when Brush put maulstick and palette aside, leaned back in his chair, and critically examined the work of the day. He did not seem to be quite pleased with it, rose and retreated a distance from the easel.

"Guess I wasn't in the right mood to-day," he mused. "Been thinking too much of other things."

He stepped to the studio window which gave a view of a little garden and, while looking down on the flower-beds and the shrubbery, fell again into a train of thought which had pursued him nearly all day.

Several days ago he had met Mrs. Emory and Miss Penrose at luncheon with Oldfield. The beauty of the young lady had immediately made an impression on his susceptible nature, and after luncheon he had jokingly forgiven Oldfield for his attempt to foist on him the Dryden spinsters and their escort.

In his efforts to make himself agreeable he had not noticed then that Oldfield, too, contrary to that

special trait of his character, seemed to have been attracted by Miss Penrose. The archæologist had not only failed to show his habitual reserve in the presence of young women, but his voice and laughter had plainly indicated the pleasure he found in her company.

During subsequent meetings Brush had, however, observed with astonishment Oldfield's unusual interest in the young lady. Nothing in the demeanor of his friend indicated, as yet, a complete infatuation, but the artist was a man of sufficient experience in such affairs to notice that he was on the best way to falling deeply in love. It being evidently Oldfield's first *affaire du coeur* he had fallen an easy victim, and Brush respected his feelings enough to renounce at once the pleasure he had promised himself from a flirtation with Mrs. Emory's ward.

It was this train of thought which he followed as he stood by the studio window. "John is going to meet his Waterloo, if he hasn't met it yet," he continued musing. "That's at least the way it looks to me. Why, a man of his character, once he leaves himself open, is lost if a girl takes advantage of the breach. She's deuced pretty, that's true, and—I—I wouldn't have minded a little flirtation." A fine smile played around the corners of his mouth as he twisted the ends of his dainty moustache.

Suddenly another thought seemed to strike him. He walked towards a small desk in a corner and

began to write. "The best antidote for an affection of the heart caused by a blonde," he murmured, while letting his pen glide over the paper, "is a pretty brunette. It's a sure cure if quickly applied." He sealed the short letter and addressed it to Signorina Carmelina Tosetti, Anacapri.

"Funny I didn't think of her sooner," he said quite loud. "She will feel honored. It is probably the first time that any one addressed her as 'Signorina.'"

Then he changed his coat, took his hat and went out. He mailed the letter and stood for a while at a corner irresolute as to the direction in which to go. Coming to a decision, he turned towards the Galleria Umberto which he crossed several times to and fro. From there he passed into the Via Roma. It was the fashionable hour, the time of the daily *corso,* and the thoroughfare was crowded with pedestrians and carriages.

Brush strolled idly up the street in the direction of the museum, looking into the shopwindows and, occasionally, admiring a beautiful woman. He was not over-fastidious in this respect, and divided his admiration, as occasion afforded, with impartiality between a charming countess in an elegant carriage and a handsome maiden of the people on the narrow sidewalk.

The city not having a model market, like that of the Spanish Stairs in Rome, Brush had adopted a

habit of looking sharply at passers-by in the street and, in this way, had often succeeded in finding suitable subjects for his work.

By dint of temperament, his attention was more attracted by the female sex, but he did not fail to also notice, from time to time, one of the striking types of masculine beauty in which Naples abounds.

He was critically approving the graceful carriage of a girl crossing the thoroughfare at a corner when his eye fell on a man on the opposite side of the street whose face and figure struck him as strangely familiar. He did not recognize him, however, until the man turned fully towards him. It was Paolo Aratta.

Brush was hesitating a moment, uncertain whether to avoid a meeting or not. Then he noticed his sudden start and soon became convinced that Paolo, on his part, had also recognized him. He crossed the street with the evident purpose of seeking an encounter. He was handsomer than ever, and the city clothes he wore did not hide the natural animal grace the artist had observed in him at their first meeting on the road of Bosco Reale.

As he approached, Brush also noticed that Paolo's features were drawn, and that his somber eyes bore a sinister expression. He seemed to have aged somewhat, and there was a hard line around his mouth which had not been apparent before.

"Buon giorno, signor," he said with a sneer in his voice, when he had come near enough to speak.

"I am glad to see you," Brush greeted him pleasantly, offering, at the same time, his hand.

The Italian hesitated a second or two; then thrust his hand forward with some reluctance.

Brush shook it cordially. "I didn't think you would recognize me in a crowd like this," he continued.

"Corpo di Bacco!" Paolo exclaimed growlingly. "I would have recognized you anywhere. Haven't I good reason to?"

"How so?"

"Why, you robbed me of a fortune." He looked at Brush half reproachfully and half threateningly.

"I—I robbed you of a fortune? What do you mean, man?" protested the latter haughtily, taking a step backward.

"Well, it wasn't really you, but your friend, that moon-faced fellow without a hair on his lips or chin, that stole my treasure. You might be his accomplice, however."

"You are using strong language, my friend," retorted Brush stepping again forward, and looking him in the eye with a steely hardness. Then he remembered that Paolo really had reasons for his attitude, and his tone was soothing when he asked: "But what makes you think that the stone my friend bought of you is a treasure?"

Paolo had recoiled under the steady glitter of Brush's eye, but immediately regained his assurance at the conciliatory question.

"What makes me think so? *E bene!* That is a long story to relate. Tell me first where is he?"

"May be I'll answer that question later. First—"

"Oh, it doesn't make much difference," Paolo interrupted with a significant shrug of his shoulders. "Sooner or later I'll find him. But tell me, what did he do with it? Did he sell it?"

"No; he didn't even show it to anyone."

"Do you think he would return it to me, if I gave him back his money?" he queried anxiously.

"I don't think so."

"Not even if I offered him two or three times as much as he paid me?"

"I am afraid not. He appreciates it too highly."

"There you see," he burst out passionately. "It is a valuable stone. It is surely worth some thousands of liras, as my friends in Torre Annunziata told me."

"And who are those wise, knowing friends?" mocked Brush.

"Never mind—never mind! I bet he has cleaned it and knows now all about it. Tell me its color? It must certainly be very old, and it is a carved stone; what they call a cameo or intaglio."

"What do you know about cameos and intaglios and their value?"

"Oh, I have learned a good deal about these things since the day he fooled me out of my stone. I am not quite as stupid as you may think."

"Why did you sell it?"

"I—sell it? Why, he took advantage of my ignorance and ran away with the stone before I even had a chance to say yes or no."

"Perhaps you are right, Paolo. At any rate, I won't deny that it is an antique cameo of a Roman empress." In the face of his rightful indignation, Brush felt compelled to tell the young Italian the truth, although it was certain to increase his rancor. Neither did he err in this supposition.

"An empress!" Paolo exclaimed in a burst of anger. "An empress! *Santa Maria!!* And he gave me eleven liras for it. What an ass I was. I knew it as soon as he had turned his back on me with the stone. He didn't answer my question honestly. He robbed me. But I will have my revenge. *Per dio!* I swear it! It is not to pat him on the back that I have come to the city almost daily in search of him. I was sure that, sooner or later, I would run across one or the other of you. I've prayed for that to the Madonna."

His face had become purple with rage. His fists were clenched, and drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. His loud voice attracted the attention of several pedestrians and, to avoid the gathering

of a crowd, Brush drew him into the side street on the corner of which they had been standing.

"If you will calm down a little," he said persuasively to the Italian who had followed him rather unwillingly, "you will find that it is, perhaps after all, too soon for you to get into a temper. May be the matter can be arranged to your satisfaction."

"Then tell me where I can find him." His anger was gradually subsiding.

"No, my friend. You are not the man, nor are you now in a mood to approach him in this matter. It would spoil things. He is an obstinate character. Besides, I would not know where to find my friend at this moment. Leave it to me, Paolo; I shall have your interest at heart."

"And let you go now? No! It may take too long until I run across you again," he protested suspiciously.

"I'll promise you not to run away," Brush reassured him with a smile, "and to prove to you my good intentions, I will show you where I live and where you may come for news about the matter."

"By the way," continued Brush, as they walked towards the Via Umberto, "I would like to have you visit me some morning in my studio. I should like to make a sketch of you."

"Ah, you are a *pittore,* signor?"

"Yes!"

"*E bene,* I have been sketched once or twice by an

artist in Torre Annunziata, but I cannot say that I like it."

"Not even at the rate of five liras per hour?"

"That is different. The other artist paid me only one."

"Here is where I live," said Brush when they had reached the house in which his studio was located, "and now, if you will give me your address on this paper, I'll let you hear from me as soon as I have something to communicate to you." He pulled a pencil and a card from his pocket and handed them to Paolo who wrote his address on it in a scrawling, but easily legible hand.

"You see, I live with my godfather, Giovanni Palestra, who keeps an *osteria* in the Strada Pellegrini in Torre Annunziata," he said, returning card and pencil. "I help him quite a deal, but I have much time for myself."

"Well, good bye then."

Paolo did not move. "Would you mind," he pleaded hesitatingly, "giving me one of your cards and—eh—showing me your studio?"

"You are evidently a suspicious fellow, Paolo," laughed Brush, guessing his motive. "I actually do live here, and though I had no intention of mounting my four flights of stairs just now I'll take you up in order to convince you of it."

After Paolo was gone, Brush threw himself into a chair and lit a cigar. He had succeeded in calming

the Italian, but there had still been a trace of suspicion in his voice when, at the door of the studio, he called out: "But I expect to hear from you soon, signor."

While blowing the smoke of his cigar into ringlets, the gradual distortion of which he followed with his eyes, he let the encounter with Paolo Aratta once more pass his mind. He asked himself whether he had acted with thorough loyalty towards Oldfield in revealing to the Italian the value of the cameo. It was undeniable that from a strictly moral point of view an injustice had been done to the latter. On the other hand, there was some logic in the arguments of Oldfield in support of his position, even if it smacked of sophistry.

Viewing thus the question from every side, Brush came to the conclusion that he had taken the correct stand when he told Paolo the truth and promised to intervene in his behalf for a satisfactory arrangement of the matter. The situation seemed to allow no other solution than an equitable compromise.

Considering Oldfield's conviction that he had done no wrong and the thoroughly developed trait of obstinacy in his character, he foresaw, however, considerable difficulties, and had really little faith in the result of his conciliatory efforts. This doubt brought him to think of the possible consequences a refusal to compromise might bring about for his friend. Paolo's threats were not to be treated

lightly. Brush was sufficiently acquainted with the Neapolitan character to fear his vengeance for Oldfield, and if he did not look exactly for a tragic finale, he still felt uneasy at the thought.

He had about made up his mind to dine that evening at the Londres for the purpose of relating his meeting with Paolo to Oldfield, and to sound him on the question of a compromise, when a knock at the door interrupted his musing. At his *"entrate"* Oldfield entered the room.

"Lupus in fabula," exclaimed Brush, rising. "The very man I have been thinking of."

"There must be some telepathic communication between us, for I, myself, have been thinking of you all afternoon. I haven't seen you for a day or more."

"I've been working rather hard. But take a cigar and sit down. I've some news that may interest you."

"Indeed?"

"I met our friend Paolo Aratta on the street."

"Aratta—who is he?"

"Is it possible that you have forgotten the man from whom you got the cameo?"

"Not the man, but the name. What of him?"

"Well, it appears that some of his friends put a flea in his ear about the probable value of his find, and he has been looking for you for several days."

"And did you tell him where he could find me?"

"No! I didn't think it advisable under the circumstances."

"And why not, pray?"

"Because he was in a state of mind that would certainly have brought on a collision between you."

"You invest the fellow with too much importance, Bob. He will come to think that he really suffered an injury."

"He does that any way and I, myself, am of the opinion that he has good cause for grievance, and—"

"I know, Bob, that your view and mine are diverging considerably on this matter," interrupted Oldfield peevishly, "but I do not feel like opening the argument again."

"Neither do I; but don't you think it would be wiser, all things considered, if you permitted me to offer him in your name a certain sum as a compromise?"

"No; because, unless you offered him a large sum, he would always retain the feeling that he had not received enough for his cameo. In fact, no matter how large you would make it, his suspicion would always whisper to him that, after all, he had been cheated. I know this class of men. At any rate, I would not want to deal with him through an intermediary."

"Then you would agree to meet him yourself?" queried Brush eagerly.

"I didn't say that."

"But I really think you should. It seems to me that you would enjoy the possession of your treasure all the more."

"I have told you before, and I still maintain that had I not acquired this cameo in the manner I did, someone else would have gotten it, probably for about the same price, if the ignorant fellow hadn't thrown it away in the meantime."

"But you heard him mention the museum authorities. He isn't as stupid as you think."

"What of it? Even the museum would not have paid more than a couple of hundred liras for it."

"Well, two hundred liras is more than eleven."

"True; but who tells you that if I offered him this amount he would be satisfied?"

"I don't know that he would, but one could try."

Oldfield pondered a minute or two, then said: "Maybe I will; but if I do, it is to please you, Bob. Your conscience is the only one which suffers in this deal. Mine doesn't bother me, I assure you."

"Then you will let me arrange a meeting?"

"If you insist—yes. But not just now. I'll let you know when I am ready."

"Good, John! I think you do the right thing."

Brush had purposely refrained from mentioning Paolo's threats. He was too well acquainted with

Oldfield's aggressive character not to fear that they might only serve to lessen the chances of an adjustment.

"And what are your plans for the evening?" Brush again started the conversation after a little pause.

"I thought of asking you to dine with us. After dinner we could go to the San Carlo. They sing 'Don Giovanni' this evening."

"Ah, I see you want to take lessons in love-making."

"I don't know what you mean, Bob. You must speak plainly with me. I don't like conundrums."

"And I think you are a base hypocrite. Do you suppose for one moment that the nature of your attentions to Miss Penrose can remain enigmatical to a man of my experience? Why, John, old boy, you are a different man altogether since her arrival. I dare say archaeology is now of secondary interest to you—eh?"

The evening gloom in the studio prevented Brush from noticing the slight confusion of Oldfield.

"I cannot say that it is, Bob. My profession is my passion, but"—this with good-natured sarcasm—"since you are such a fine observer and it interests you so much, I will confess that Miss Penrose attracts me more than any other woman did so far. She is really interesting."

"Not only that, but deuced pretty; and if I were not your stanch friend, I would make love to her myself."

"You have my permission; but, somehow, I don't like this habitual flippancy of yours when you talk of Lucile."

"Lucile?" drawled Brush significantly. "I see you have it bad, John. But you need instruction, for you are a very tyro in the art of love-making. So let's hear 'Don Giovanni' this evening."

"I guess no one who really loves needs that instruction. But, if I needed a teacher in love-making, I could probably not find a better one than Robert Brush, Esq., professor emeritus and past master of the art."

"Thank you for the compliment," laughed Brush.

"Hold on; you misunderstand me. I didn't mean to compliment you. I refer only to the *art* of love-making. Love is a different thing, according to my conception; and of that I don't believe you know a thing. Love is nature and not art."

"Ah, you start to philosophize on the subject? This convinces me that the vaccine virus of Cupid's arrow has taken with you."

"Oh, let up, for heaven's sake."

"Well, you'll be the better man for it. It raises you a peg or two in my esteem. At any rate, the adoration of a modern Venus is preferable to that of

the archaic ladies in marble or bronze which you have so far worshipped exclusively."

"What a rhetorician you are, Bob," smiled Oldfield mockingly. "But I guess we'd better go to dinner. It's getting late."

VII

JOAN OF ARC

A letter had been handed to Carmelina, and she was seated at the rustic table in the arbor of her garden. Through the network of leaves the sun played on her bluish-black hair. The ebony mass was wound in two glorious tresses around her shapely head which was bent low over the sheet of paper on the table. She had, evidently, some difficulty in deciphering its contents, for her index finger followed the lines while the forehead was drawn in slight furrows of thought between her eyes. As she proceeded, a smile gradually expanded over her features and the brow resumed its ivory smoothness. With the last line she jumped from her seat with an exclamation of joy and ran into the house waving the letter over her head.

Mother Tosetti was stirring with a long wooden spoon a mess of *polenta* over the open hearth when Carmelina burst in on her with a suddenness which made her spill a spoonful of the cornmeal into the wood fire.

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"What's the matter with you now," she scolded indignantly. "You fall in the door as if the house were on fire. Have you gone crazy?"

"No—no, mother; but here is a letter from the Signor Brotchi who wants me to come to-morrow. Really, I didn't think he meant it when he spoke about painting my picture."

"*E bene,* that's no reason to go crazy about it—even if it gives you a chance to earn a little money," she added after a brief pause.

"It's not that at all that makes me happy, mother, but—" She stopped and a faint blush mounted to her cheeks.

"Well, what else is it? You have been to Naples before."

"O, I don't know myself, but somehow or other I feel much happier at the thought of going than ever before."

"Don't let that interfere now with your work, child. Go and get me some more wood. The fire is nearly out."

Carmelina obeyed the order without a reply and then went about her other household duties. She was in a happy mood and accompanied her work with such boisterous singing that she was frequently reproved by her mother.

Ever since the windfall of Brush's reward had come to the Tosetti family all the members of the household had felt elated, but no one seemed to be

as happy as the young girl. The fact that it was to be her dowry appeared to others the only reason of her over-brimming happiness, but, while this comparative wealth certainly had a large share, there was something else that was the principal cause of it.

What this something was she could probably not have explained, but the thought of the young artist who was so handsome, so totally different from the other young men she knew, and the hope that he would keep his promise to see her again was foremost in her mind. Withal she doubted that he ever would ask her to sit for him, and when his letter came it was in the nature of a surprise.

In the fullness of her heart she found no other subject of conversation during the rest of the day, and in the evening when she talked over the low garden wall to Luigi, a young neighbor, whose liking for her had much increased lately, her enthusiasm resulted in arousing his jealousy.

"I suppose you will get stuck up now that you have money and the rich American has asked you to pose for him," remarked Luigi after she had told him of her impending visit to the artist.

"Don't talk nonsense," she replied somewhat hotly; "you know I am not that kind of a girl. I must confess though that I am a little proud of being asked to sit for my picture by this American gentle-

man who does not look a bit like those other *pittori* you find all over Capri."

"And quite likely you find him a good-looking fellow too." His voice betrayed irritation.

"What if I do?"

"Oh, nothing; only he is a *forestiere,* a rich one at that, and these strangers never mean anything good when they condescend to call on a poor girl, as this one did, and then ask her to meet them in the city. *Maladetto!* If you were my sister I wouldn't let you go."

"I believe you are jealous because he is handsomer than any of you fellows around here," she laughed mockingly. "But I am only teasing you," she added when she noticed his vexation, "there are some very nice boys in Capri, and this signor is much too high above my station of life to think of him with anything but a sense of gratitude for his generosity."

"Still, I almost wish you hadn't found that pocketbook."

"Why should you?"

"I don't know myself, but I am afraid it may—oh, I don't know what I am afraid of, but you know, Carmelina, that I love you and—"

"And I have told you often enough that I won't listen to such nonsense. If you start on that subject again I'll have to say 'good-night.' "

"But, Carmelina—"

"No, no, no but—I have to go in anyway; it's late.

Good night!" She left him abruptly and went into the house.

The following morning she and Pietro took the early market boat for Naples, the latter carrying a large bouquet of flowers which Carmelina had gathered with the night dew still glistening on their petals. She was attired in her Sunday costume, the same she had worn when she first met Brush at the headquarters of the *carabinieri*.

As they walked hand in hand through the streets asking, from time to time, directions from a policeman, Carmelina's unusual beauty attracted some attention, and once or twice she was spoken to by an early *flaneur*. These advances she naively met by asking the same questions about the location of Brush's studio as she had asked of the policemen.

At the top of the stairs in the house of the Via Umberto she stopped a minute or two, her heart beating almost audibly, before she put her hand on the handle of the old-fashioned door bell. Brush himself opened the door. He was clad in a paint-bespattered brown velvet jacket, and on his left forearm rested a large palette from under which protruded the knob of a short maulstick.

"Ah, Carmelina," he exclaimed joyously, "I was sure you wouldn't fail me. I expected you." He bid them enter, which they did shyly.

"And here is the little man too," he continued, as they stood near the door hesitating to advance

farther into the studio, the strange and luxurious aspect of which seemed to overawe them. He put his hand caressingly on the tousled head of Pietro, who looked about him with round-eyed curiosity.

"Nothing to be afraid of; he is dead," he encouraged him when the little fellow shrank back at the sight of a tiger rug the stuffed head of which, with snarling upper lip, looked threateningly from a corner.

"Why don't you hand the signor the flowers you brought for him?" Carmelina pushed the boy gently forward.

"Did you gather them yourself?" Brush asked, taking the bunch from his hand.

"No, she did," answered Pietro, putting a thumb into his mouth and pointing the index finger of his other hand at his sister.

"How thoughtful and sweet of you, Carmelina. I love flowers." He made her sit down in a curule chair in the middle of the studio. She seemed embarassed and had answered his greeting only with a smile. Her eyes, too, wandered about the studio until they were arrested by a large painting on an easel.

Its subject was of somber character. Out of the background of medieval buildings with slanting tile roofs, slightly dimmed by clouds of umber smoke, loomed the white youthful figure of a girl tied to an upright post. The rest of the middleground and the

foreground were taken up by a motley throng of soldiers and citizens, men in knightly mail, and scarlet and purple-robed ecclesiastics. Closest to the central figure, at the base of a pyre over which rose the upright post, a man in red was applying the torch to the faggots. The flame was just beginning to lick the robe and bare feet of the victim.

Next to the easel stood a low table covered with paint tubes, small bottles, brushes and linen rags. It was evident that Brush had worked on this painting when Carmelina rang the bell.

"I am glad to see you interested in this painting," he said after a few minutes' silence during which she had not taken her eyes from the composition, while Pietro nestled close to her side.

"It is weird," she assented, "but it is beautiful at the same time. What does it represent?"

He told her the story of Joan of Arc, and found to his surprise that this young uneducated country girl possessed an intelligence which he had not suspected in her.

"And why are you pleased to find me interested in this picture?" she asked when he had finished.

"Because it is the very one for which I want you to pose."

"But isn't it finished? It looks to me that way."

"No, child; far from it. The central figure, that is the girl at the stake, does not suit me at all—at least the face and expression do not—and I am go-

ing to scrape it off and have you sit for it. You will make a better Maid of Orleans."

"I will try to please you, signor," she answered simply, raising her eyes to his.

"Then let us start as soon as possible. You cannot pose any longer, I suppose, than to the time your boat sails back again—that is in the early afternoon, I believe. So you'd better put on this rough sackcloth behind that screen, while I scrape off the face on the canvass. Pietro can amuse himself meanwhile looking at this picture book." He handed her a garment which corresponded with the one the Maid wore on the picture. Then he stepped to the easel and started to erase with a knife the head of the central figure.

A rustling of skirts behind the screen in the corner, mingled with the noise of the scraping instrument, was for a short time the only thing that interrupted the stillness of the studio.

Suddenly a sharp ring of the door bell reverberated in the anteroom, and Brush went to open the door. Before him stood the Misses Dryden and Mr. Stickney.

"How do you do, Mr. Brush?" smiled Miss Dryden, offering her gloved hand to him. "You didn't expect to see us so soon—did you?"

"Yes, we always keep our promises," chirped Miss Carolyn, with the same gesture of greeting, while

Stickney slapped his shoulder familiarly with a good-natured "How goes it, old man?"

Brush was so dismayed at the unexpected intrusion that he nearly allowed his features to betray his feelings, and it was only with an effort that he controlled his voice when he politely bid them enter the studio.

"How delightful, how interesting!" The ladies uttered little exclamations of surprise and pleasure as they walked about the room admiring the sketches, costumes, rugs, arms and *objets d' art* scattered on walls, easels and tables.

Stickney was absorbed in the examination of a study of the nude from which Miss Dryden had modestly turned away.

"A little model, I guess," observed Miss Carolyn noticing Pietro who had almost effaced himself behind his picture book.

The younger Miss Dryden's remark recalled to Brush the fact that Carmelina was in the act of changing costume behind the screen. He was apprehensive of the curiosity of his visitors and managed to interpose himself just in time before Miss Dryden could take a look behind the screen where her sharp ears had perceived a movement.

"No; the little boy is here with his sister who is about to pose for this figure." He pointed to the painting of Joan of Arc.

"Ah, how interesting! I hope we are not disturb-

ing you in your work," said Miss Dryden apologetically, her eyes still resting on the screen. "Don't mind us at all. We can look around and talk to you at the same time."

"It *is* my working time," he replied, glad of the remark which relieved him of the embarrassing task of hinting that the visit was inopportune, "but, somehow or other, I cannot paint and keep up a conversation at the same time. However, don't let that refrain you from staying."

"Well, we won't disturb you very long, Mr. Brush. As it is, we had no intention of paying you an extended visit this morning—did we, Mr. Stickney?"

The latter was still admiring the study of the nymph. He only heard his name and turned around without an answer. Miss Dryden repeated her remark.

"Indeed we didn't. We only came to see how you are located. We have some churches on our program this morning. By the way, that picture there gave me a new idea for an ad. You know, I always have ideas. I'd like to buy that girl from you and have you paint a porous plaster on her back. She is in the right position for it." He pointed to the nude study. "What will you take for her?"

"I am sorry I can't sell her to you," declined Brush with just a trace of an ironical smile, "as the picture belongs to the artist from whom I rent this studio."

"Where is he?"

"In Paris."

"Too bad! Well, perhaps you can get it for me when he comes back. I leave it to you to pay what it is worth and then send it to my address C. O. D. But he must paint the plaster on it. What do you think of my idea, Miss Dryden?"

"May be it is a good one from a commercial point of view, but it would be a shame to disfigure the picture."

Brush was almost inclined to forgive the party the untimely intrusion for this remark of Miss Dryden.

"Well, let's go then," urged Stickney.

"I have been looking around the studio for that instrument, the *cicerone* or whatever you call it," said Miss Carolyn; "I am anxious to see it. Where do you keep it, Mr. Brush?"

"It's being repaired," he replied gravely, as he accompanied them to the landing.

With a sigh of relief he hung an "Absent" sign on the door and returned to his work.

Pietro was still bent over the picture book and, after a while, the rustle, which had been renewed behind the screen, stopped.

"Are you ready, Carmelina?" he asked when he had finished effacing the head of Joan of Arc.

"I am; but I cannot close this garment at the neck," she complained.

"Come out and let me see," he suggested.

She stepped from behind the screen, holding the rough cloth together at her throat.

"Why, that isn't supposed to be closed as high as that. You must expose your neck fully, like the figure on the painting."

"Must I?" Her tone was innocent and confiding.

He led her to a low pile of gnarled logs at the base of a slender column which supported the ceiling where it joined the slanting studio light.

"And now you lean against this post as nearly as possible in the position you see there and assume an expression of physical pain. Imagine your feet being touched by flames."

"I don't know whether I can make exactly such a face," she doubted naively. "I have never burned myself. However, I will try."

He assisted her in assuming the proper pose and arranged the garment at her throat. A deep blush suffused her face as his fingers touched her skin, and his hand trembled slightly at the sight of the firm virginal bust which heaved agitatedly under the rough cloth, and which he partly exposed to view. Then he stepped to his easel and began to work, the artist almost immediately overcoming the emotion of the man.

Carmelina's features were admirably suited for the character of the Maid of Orleans, combining innocence, dreaminess and latent ardor, but Brush was somewhat in doubt as to whether she would suc-

ceed in portraying the composite expression of resignation, eternal hope and anguish which the subject called for. It was principally this shortcoming in the painting which had spurred him to another effort, and he hoped from Carmelina's beauty and intelligence the result which he had failed to obtain from his first model.

While sketching in the head with charcoal he explained his ideas to her which she seemed to easily comprehend, and she followed his suggestions with much painstaking and intelligence. He began to be more assured of a satisfactory result after several sittings would have given her a complete understanding of what was required of her.

The pose was somewhat tiring and he permitted her a rest between periods of fifteen minutes' work. During these pauses she talked to Pietro who had become fidgety after he had perused the picture book and seen everything else that interested him in the studio, and Brush sounded Carmelina's character and intellect by drawing her out on various subjects. He found her absolutely unsophisticated, amiable, confiding and of an affectionate temperament which, like the true Italian she was, even in her virginal innocence showed traces of a slumbering passion capable of unlimited devotion or unforgiving hatred, as the case might be.

"And have you never dreamed of me again?" he queried after he had once more allowed her a rest.

"I mean since the dream where I was shaking the gold pieces into your lap."

"I have, once or twice," she admitted naively.

"Will you tell me what you dreamed?" His voice was tender and coaxing.

"No, I can't." She said it almost inaudibly and with lowered eyelashes.

"Why can't you?" he pursued gently, raising her chin and trying to look into her eyes.

"Because it is too stupid and impossible." She still kept her glance lowered, and an embarrassed smile played around the corners of her lips.

"Still, I would like very much to know," he insisted.

"But I really can't tell you because—well, because I can't." She broke away from him with a peal of coquettish laughter and ran to Pietro who amused himself now with a manikin.

Brush felt a warmth rise in his heart which, to that degree, he had rarely experienced in his intercourse with the other sex. He felt flattered by the artless insinuation in Carmelina's answer, more so, perhaps, because it came from a child of nature than if it had come from a woman of his own sphere. It was the kind of flattery that would fill a susceptible man, such as he was, with the vanity of a peacock who spreads the glory of his tail to his flock of admiring hens.

But Brush tried to overcome this weakness, and

returned to his work with the ardor and impatience of one who had allowed himself to be interrupted in an important task by some trivial incident. When he stopped it was time for Carmelina and Pietro to hurry to their boat and he took them in a cab to the *quai.*

On the way he bought some fruit, excusing himself for his neglect to offer her a luncheon at the studio. He, himself, had forgotten the noon meal, and Pietro had contentedly staved off his appetite by sucking a big stick of candy which Carmelina had bought him on the way to the Via Umberto.

Before he left them on the boat he pressed into her hand a twenty-lira piece with the request not to fail him on the sitting days which he had appointed, and the promise of an equal compensation for each work day. She seemed surprised at his generosity, but accepted the money without comment and a simple *"Grazia, signor."*

He looked thoughtfully after the vessel, from the railing of which Carmelina waved her handkerchief to him, and when it was well out in the bay he turned and went to luncheon.

VIII

OLDFIELD THAWS OUT

Oldfield had been much with Mrs. Emory and Miss Penrose since their arrival at Naples without, however, neglecting his researches in the various libraries, museums and excavation sites. Access to the latter had been given him in consequence of influential letters from his institution and the state authorities of Washington and, once or twice, he had been accompanied to Herculaneum and Pompeii by Lucile who showed considerable interest in the work of the young archæologist.

This interest flattered and pleased Oldfield. His natural disinclination for woman's society had suffered quite a breach since the fire of Lucile's eyes had unconsciously created havoc with the armor of his aversion. Resistance against the subtle influence of her charms became weaker as he discovered, from day to day, new attractions in the young woman, and he would probably have been ready to capitulate had a surrender been demanded. But, as yet, he had not given the slightest utterance to his feelings.

Miss Penrose, however, was not a flirt in the

common sense of the word. She had not laid a systematic siege to his heart, but with the characteristic of her sex, which disdains an easy conquest and prefers to reach for the apparently unattainable, she found distraction and even pleasure in drawing Oldfield out of the shell of his reputed misogyny. At the same time, being far from an accomplished coquette, she herself became interested in his personality and conversation which differed favorably from that of the over-polite and conventional men she had met during the two short years of her life in society. There was something in his curt and reserved ways that attracted her, but, after all, did not touch a tender heart-string. He was too devoid of the sentiment and romanticism with which her fancy had robed the hero of her maiden dreams.

Mrs. Emory, feeling somewhat indisposed, Oldfield and Lucile were taking luncheon alone in the dining room of the Londres. The heat of the last few days had been oppressive and the electric fan near their table wafted the stray ringlets of her bronze hair across her forehead and eyes. Time and again she brushed them back with her habitual gesture, while the young man watched with fascination the play of the rebellious strands which were the first physical charms he had noticed on her.

"What a nuisance long hair is," she remarked observing his interest in the dainty movements of her

hand. "Men are so sensible; they wouldn't be bothered with it."

"Still we wouldn't like to have women imitate our example," he protested. "Why, the hair of a woman is one of the main charms of feminine beauty, and if it is hair like yours, Miss Penrose,—" He stopped rather abruptly and looked at his plate while toying with a fork.

"And if it is hair like mine?" she queried coquettishly.

"Oh, I was going to say something foolish which better remains unsaid. At any rate, the weather is warm enough to make one feel uncomfortable with short or long hair."

"Indeed it is. It caused the indisposition of Mrs. Emory, and she spoke this morning of leaving Naples to escape the heat. She mentioned Sorrento."

"A good idea. But why just Sorrento?"

"Isn't that the place you recommended in one of your letters to her?"

"True; but, come to think, Sorrento is a little far from the city."

"What difference does that make?"

"Perhaps not any. But I thought of a place in Torre del Greco of which Bob spoke to me. It is a small furnished villa with large trees and plenty of shade on the outskirts of the little town, an idyllic spot of which he made a charming sketch. It is for rent, he says."

"Have you seen it?"

"No; but it wouldn't be a bad idea to drive out there this afternoon and look at it."

Mrs. Emory felt unequal to the task of driving out to the villa when Oldfield proposed it to her after lunch, but gave him *carte blanche* to make the necessary arrangements for renting the place if he thought it suitable for her purpose.

"In fact," she said, "it would please me to be nearer to you than I would be at Sorrento, and if the house is large enough I want you to stay with us—your work permitting. Alone, we may be afraid out there."

"Thanks for the invitation, aunt Clara. I may accept it. You know Torre del Greco would be sort of a midway station between Naples and Pompeii where my work calls me to most frequently. I am sorry, though, you cannot come out with us this afternoon to see the villa."

"I can imagine your sorrow at having only Lucile for company," remarked the old lady with a touch of benevolent sarcasm. She had for some days noticed with satisfaction the growing fondness of her nephew for the society of Miss Penrose.

Oldfield did not answer the remark directly, but turning to the young lady said: "Now, Miss Penrose, if you want to get ready meanwhile, I'll run over to Brush and have him go with us. We might not be able to find the place by ourselves. You'd better

take a light coat along; the road, after Portici, is likely to be very dusty."

He found Brush at work and half unwilling to leave it, but after a little persuasion succeeded in getting him away from his easel. Both then went to a near-by garage, where they had rented motor cars before, and engaged an automobile for the afternoon.

Lucile was ready and waiting for them when they appeared at the hotel, and her face, framed by a green motoring veil, looked like a pink rose against the fresh foliage of a bouquet. As they drove off, Brush, who had, from association, acquired the Italian habit of flattering women at all occasions, paid her an extravagant compliment on her appearance which she warded off without further notice than a smile. Of the two men Oldfield was more sympathetic to her and, although she recognized the talented artist in Brush and had detected some of the sterling qualities he possessed, she did not take him seriously in his conduct toward women.

The car proceeded with moderate speed through the populous outlying streets of Naples, through Portici and Resina, where they saw fences and washlines covered with freshly-made *maccaroni* hung there to dry, past the subterranean entrance to Herculaneum, always in view of the double summit of Vesuvius, until they reached the first houses of Torre del Greco. Here a warning signboard made the

chauffeur slow down, and, as he throttled the gasoline valve, the machine passed a pedestrian on the narrow sidewalk in whom Brush immediately recognized Paolo Aratta.

The young Italian had his coat slung over the shoulder and carried his broad hat in his hand. The chug-chug of the car behind had made him turn his face toward the road and he too recognized the two men with a gesture of surprise. He made a motion as if to walk out into the road to the machine which, however, passed him before he could execute his purpose. Oldfield had not noticed him and Brush only waved his hand in recognition. He leaned out of the car, however, looked back and saw Paolo increase his stride.

"Did you see our friend Aratta on the sidewalk?" he queried of Oldfield who occupied the front seat of the tonneau with Lucile.

"I did not," was the curt reply.

"Do you mean the young man who looked so surprised when we passed him," asked Lucile with some show of interest.

"Yes."

"A handsome fellow," she remarked. "Rather taller than the average Italian. I noticed his magnificent eyes. Who is he?"

"Oh, a native we met some time ago on the road near Pompeii; no person of interest," Brush replied evasively.

He directed the chauffeur into a side street and after several more turns the automobile stopped in front of a small cream-colored villa with green Venetian blinds which stood in a spacious garden. A grilled iron gate, hinged to two masonry columns, each topped with the crude effigy of a fierce heraldic lion rampant holding a shield, and a low stuccoed brick wall, crowned with an iron fence, separated the grounds from the street in front and a wooded lane in the rear of the premises, which led to the open country beyond. From the rear and one side of the house Vesuvius was in plain view.

A ring at the gate bell brought no answer and a closer look at the "To-Let" sign told the visitors that information and keys could be had at a neighboring house to which Oldfield repaired at once. He soon returned with a pompous-looking individual who introduced himself as the owner of the premises and showed them through the villa and grounds.

The building was a two-story structure with a veranda and a balcony fronting the street and proved sufficiently large to accommodate Mrs. Emory, Miss Penrose, Oldfield, and a couple of servants, besides leaving a commodious room for a guest.

Lucile was specially delighted with the picturesque situation of the house and its surroundings, and the rent asked being reasonable in spite of the fact that the would-be tenants were Americans, a verbal agree-

ment was soon concluded between Oldfield and the landlord, pending the signing of the formal lease.

When the automobile had passed Paolo Aratta in the main street of Torre del Greco he thought for a moment that he could use the opportunity to approach Oldfield with a demand for restitution of his cameo or the payment of an adequate sum for it. He was about to run after the car when he realized that the action would be untimely and probably in vain, but, noticing the heavy tracks of the machine in the dusty road, he concluded to follow them unless they should take him too far out of his way.

He had faith in Brush's promise to arrange a compromise of some sort between him and Oldfield, if such were possible, and, although he had, as yet, received no word from him to that effect, it was curiosity more than anything else which led him to follow the tracks of the automobile.

He had done this for less than a mile when he saw the car standing in front of the villa gate with only the chauffeur in attendance. He waited a while until he saw, through the iron fence on the wall, the party come out of the villa, walk through the garden and then return once more to the building.

For a moment Miss Penrose appeared on the balcony alone talking the while, as it seemed, to someone within the house, and Paolo was struck by her uncommon beauty and the graceful poise of her figure as she leaned over the railing. He saw there

a woman so different from the class he was accustomed to see, and so superior and attractive, that he instinctively stepped forward to get a better view of her. He shrank back again and effaced himself behind the trunk of a tree when she turned her head in his direction. Lucile had not noticed him, however.

A few minutes later the door of the villa opened and the little group walked towards the gate where the proprietor separated from it with many polite assurances of having everything put in order at once. As they prepared to enter the automobile Miss Penrose noticed Paolo who stood at some distance looking intently at them.

"There is the young man again we passed on the road," she exclaimed with a slight raise of her chin in his direction. "He must have followed us."

The two men looked at the Italian who did not move or speak, but continued to stare silently at the group near the motor car. Oldfield made a step towards him, but was arrested by a grip from Brush on his arm.

"Let me speak to him, John," Bob said in an undertone, "and, by the way, permit me to make the arrangement for a meeting between you. You remember your promise."

"Go ahead," replied Oldfield sulkily in the same voice.

Lucile had seated herself in the car. "Do you

know," she said, "that your friend from Pompeii has the most soulful and lustrous eyes I have ever seen. He looks very intelligent too, not at all like the ordinary native one might presume him to be. There is something very interesting about him."

"Do you think so? I should like to know what interest there can attach to a garlic-smelling ignorant Italian such as this fellow is," Oldfield protested contemptuously.

"I am astonished at your lack of artistic conception. Why, I noticed his splendid head and graceful carriage at a glance, and I would wager that Mr. Brush is of the same opinion. I am quite curious to know under what circumstances you happened to meet him."

"A casual rencontre on the road—that's all. I wonder at the long conversation Brush is having with him." He seated himself beside her in the tonneau, leaving the door open, and veered to another subject.

"It seems we are bound to meet, Paolo," said Brush, extending his hand when he had walked up to the Italian. "What are you doing in Torre del Greco?"

"I was back from an errand for my godfather when you passed me in that horseless wagon of yours. It was going a little too fast or I would have liked to stop you for a word, a friendly word, you know, about our affair."

"But you followed us?"

"Not exactly. You were going about the same way that I was, and being somewhat of a curious nature, I stopped when I saw your *automovile*—that's what you call it, I believe—stand in front of Signor Ferrari's vacant villa. Do you expect to rent it?"

"My friend has leased it for his aunt, and I may as well tell you that Mr. Oldfield, too, will probably be one of its occupants. He has just authorized me to arrange for a meeting with you in regard to the cameo, and I hope the matter will be amicably settled between you."

"So he has really consented to talk it over with me?" Paolo remarked with a sneer. "It's very good of him."

"I would advise you not to adopt that tone with him," warned Brush, "it might spoil everything."

"Oh, don't fear, I will be meek, meek as a lamb, when I ask for justice, for my rights," replied Paolo bitterly, "but I want them and if he does not do the right thing—*per Bacco*—"

"Well, then come next week," interposed Brush, interrupting the threat the irritable Italian was about to utter; "I will let you know by mail the day and hour as soon as they are settled here."

"*E bene;* I will come, you may be sure." Paolo had suppressed the temper into which he was about to work himself. "By the way," he added, as Brush

turned to walk back to the car, "who is the *signorina* there with your friend?"

"I must say you are inquisitive, friend Paolo," replied Brush with a gesture of impatience and resentment.

"Not that it matters. I can generally find things out for myself if I am interested. It isn't hard to guess though; she is too good-looking to be his sister." He raised his hat with a polite *"a rivederci"* and remained where he stood until Brush, half amused at the sally, had mounted the automobile and the chauffeur had made the turn to go back to Naples. As the machine passed him he caught a glance from Miss Penrose who seemed to make a remark about him to the artist. Then he continued his way.

The conversation between Oldfield, Lucile and Brush on the way back to Naples turned on various subjects, but principally on the country house just leased and its attractions. Once or twice Lucile tried to speak of the young Italian whose mysterious relations to her American friends had aroused her curiosity, but the perfunctory and evasive answers of both men soon convinced her that they did not care to discuss him, and she tactfully desisted.

With the excuse of having another engagement Brush declined an invitation to dine and left Oldfield and Miss Penrose at their hotel. In reality he did not accept because he thought that the illness of Mrs.

Emory would give Oldfield a chance to dine alone with Lucile, and though he knew John well enough to be convinced that the invitation extended was *bona fide* he felt himself *de trop*.

Oldfield found Mrs. Emory still somewhat indisposed and, after reporting to her on plan and situation of the villa and the negotiations of the afternoon, he definitely accepted her proposal to be one of its occupants. In fact, the invitation was more in the nature of a request, as the old lady claimed that she would not feel safe to inhabit the country house alone with her ward and native servants.

During dinner, which they took, as usually, at their reserved table in the public dining room, Oldfield felt inordinately animated at the prospect of coming even in closer daily contact with Lucile at the Villa Ferrari than had been the case at the Londres. His conversation was not only interesting but brilliant when it touched his favorite subject. He entertained her on some phases of social life in ancient Rome and, speaking of the palace intrigues at the court of the Julian Cæsars, he produced several coins with the effigies of some of the emperors and princesses under discussion which he had lately added to his numismatic collection.

"How extremely interesting such coins are," said Lucile, examining them carefully; "and to think that the men and women whose portraits they bear have

made history, have lived and loved as we do, but are dead now close on to two thousand years."

"Yes," he answered enthusiastically, "they have made history, but they have not lived and loved like we. Their's was a degenerate age which had caused the downfall of the old republic and was the tottering forerunner of the final crush of the empire by more virile forces. As to these coins, I cannot imagine anything more fascinating than the hobby of collecting them. When I hold one in my hand, it tells me a story, a story of endless interest. What is its history? Where has it been, and through what hands has it passed in the many centuries since it received its shape under the sledgehammer blow of a Roman artisan? Did it once procure admission for a Quirite to Caracalla's or Diocletian's baths? Did it pass through the hands of St. Paul as a charity gift to some needy persecuted Christian? Or was it, perhaps, thrown by Commodus himself as a healing salve to a gladiator whom he had stretched in the sand of the arena with his own imperial arm? Did it form part of the spoils received by a legionary of Vespasian or Titus after the destruction of Jerusalem? Ah, if it could tell its history from the day of its birth to its final resting place on the velvet tray of a coin cabinet, what story we would hear."

Lucile had listened to his monologue with more than interest. The romantic side of the theme, as exposed by him, appealed specially to her, and her

admiration was plainly expressed in the glance with which she handed him back the coins.

They had finished their dessert and the waiter was placing the finger bowls before them. She daintily rubbed her finger tips against the slice of lemon while he slipped the coins into his pocket.

"To come back from the mystic past," he remarked observing her operation, "it is a sensible thing that you do there. I never disinfect or clean in the least the coins I get for my collection. And since we are once more in the present what do you say to a little walk down to the water front, Miss Penrose? Don't you find it a little sultry in the hotel?"

"Indeed I do. Let's go." And after a little musing: "I really think it is about time for me to give you permission to call me Lucile. We are anyway almost like relatives, you the nephew, I the ward of dear Mrs. Emory. And now when we shall form a little family in Torre del Greco it will be so much more natural. I shall call you John too, if you don't mind."

"I will be more than delighted, Lucile," he replied, touching her hand gently as he handed her a light lace shawl which she threw over her shoulders.

She linked her arm in his, and they walked slowly towards the Castel Nuovo and the Arsenal. The evening was fine, but rather warm, and the cooling sea breeze kept them for a long time at the water's edge. Returning in a roundabout way to the Piazza

Municipio they passed the Galleria Umberto from where the strains of Neapolitan airs issued to the street.

"Shall we have an ice?" Oldfield suggested. She consented, and they seated themselves at a little marble table in front of one of the *cafés* in the lofty arcade. Past them swept the stream of promenaders, happy and laughing, and sometimes their clamorous southern gayety nearly drowned the sounds of the string orchestra. Frequently they were molested by venders of postal cards and other wares who were good-naturedly dismissed until a peddler of cameos and carved corrals displayed his tray on their table.

"*Molto bello,*" said the man, exhibiting a cameo in the setting of a breast pin.

"It is pretty," remarked Lucile, "and it is really remarkable how cheap they sell these articles, considering the artistic work of some of them. I have bought a fine one, but I like to look at them. This one represents Diana at the chase."

Oldfield cast a careless glance at the object. "This reminds me, Lucile,—he had made liberal use of his new privilege during the evening—that I haven't shown you an antique cameo which I purchased a few days before your arrival," he said. "It is a veritable treasure, such as spoils one's taste for these cheap modern products. I am going to show it to you tomorrow."

"Why not this evening?"

"Because I have not got it with me and it takes time and good light to appreciate its wonderful details."

"Why, is it so late?"

He looked at his watch. "Twenty minutes to midnight. Pretty near time for little girls to be in bed," he informed her jokingly.

"You are right, John," she laughed, "especially as we have to be up early to start our preparations for the change to Torre del Greco." She rose from her chair.

"I didn't mean it that way. Why, this is a boomerang."

IX

"DAS KRUZIFIX"

Carmelina had been at the studio for several sittings, and the painting was near completion. Brush was sitting at some distance from the easel contemplating it. He had learned to conscientiously criticise his own work in the severe school of the master with whom he had studied and, as yet, he was not entirely satisfied. There was something essential lacking in the spiritual quality of the painting which he had so far tried in vain to get.

Carmelina had proved to be an intelligent model. She fully comprehended her task and, while posing, had tried her best to impersonate the Maid of Orleans in the dramatic finale of her life. Her efforts, however, had not materially aided Brush in getting the effect he was striving for.

There was a far-away look in the eyes on the canvas that once more seemed to behold the visions which led the peasant girl of Domrémy from her native village to the cathedral of Rheims. It spoke of hope and faith, but the suggestion of that exquisite physical pain, caused by the first cruel touch of flame,

was only weakly expressed in the madonna-like features, and it was this shortcoming that principally worried Brush in the contemplation of his work.

He felt a little discouraged when he, at last, turned from the painting and stepped to the window from which he thoughtfully looked down in the court. This morning he was to have the last sitting from Carmelina, and he was impatiently awaiting her arrival.

After a few minutes, during which he had nervously twirled the ends of his mustache between his fingers, he retired from the window and, seating himself once more, took up a book from a nearby table. It was a German volume of Adalbert Chamisso's poems. He read at first listlessly, his eyes wandering over the lines without interest, when, suddenly, he became more attentive and his features betrayed an intense emotion. His eyes flashed with a strange light as they rapidly flew over the next page. Then, as suddenly as he had become interested, he stopped reading and flung the book aside. He jumped up and paced the floor. What he read was an artist's legend, the mythical story of a sculptor who had created a masterpiece in a gruesome way. It was entitled *"Das Kruzifix."*

"For months an artist had been chiseling a 'Savior on the Cross.' The marble was nearing its completion, but the master was far from being satisfied with his work. As he stood, one day, contemplating and

criticising the statue, he found the chief fault in the play of the marble muscles under the effect of physical pain. He deplored the lack of a live model that could furnish him the anatomical action of a human body under the torture of the cross.

"At this moment a young man, one of his pupils, entered the studio. To his exclamation of rapture at the sight of the statue, the master replied sadly and with a sigh: 'Ah! it were different had I but a live man tied to yonder wooden crucifix.' The ardent, unsuspecting youth offered himself as model and, with extreme satisfaction, the artist unrobed and bound him tightly to the cross. Then he locked the studio securely and drove three spikes through the hands and feet of his victim.

"The agonized cries of the youth remained unheard and, for three days and nights, without rest, and not heeding the tears and implorations of the unfortunate apprentice, the master worked in a frenzy of enthusiasm. When, on the eve of the last day, he threw the chisel aside he had produced a masterpiece, but, with the setting of the sun, the life of the model, too, had ebbed away.

"Soon remorse took hold of the master and, giving himself up to justice, he expiated the crime in the same manner in which he had sacrificed the youth to his ambition."

"The fool!" Brush murmured between his teeth;

"it was cruel and unnecessary to kill him. Such means are too drastic."

Then he arrested himself before the painting, but he gazed at it with a blank stare, and did not seem to look at anything in particular. His fingers played nervously behind his back while he continued his musing.

"An analogous case," he thought. "Here I am, my canvas nearly finished. All I need is to observe a twitching of certain facial muscles caused by the application of fire to the soles of my model's feet. But I am not a Torquemada, and we do not live in the age of the Inquisition. However, she is too pretty and good to even have a hair singed from her head. I wouldn't think of it."

A ring of the door bell interrupted his train of thought and he hurried to the vestibule. It was Carmelina. As he ushered her into the studio he noticed that she had come without Pietro.

"And where is the little man?" he asked.

"He is down with the measles," she replied; "only a slight attack, but mother would have kept me home if I hadn't insisted on coming. I did not wish to disappoint you, especially as this is to be the last sitting."

"It is very considerate of you, Carmelina. You are a good girl, but, really, you could have written and postponed your coming."

"Perhaps you are afraid of infection?"

"Not at all, child—and to prove it, I will kiss you if you let me."

She retreated a step and blushed deeply. "Oh, no, signor, you don't mean that. It wouldn't be right."

"Well, you needn't be scared, girlie; I am only jesting."

Everything was ready for work, and Brush had, for the moment, forgotten the legend of the *Kruzifix* which, just before her arrival, had so visibly affected him. But, as he took up his palette, his eyes fell once more on the book which he had left open on the table. From there he looked at Carmelina who was about to assume her pose. An odd thought flashed through his mind. "I wonder if it would frighten her?"

"I was just reading an intensely interesting German legend," he remarked in pursuance of his thought, "and it is too bad you don't understand the language. I would have liked to read it to you."

"Can't you tell me about it while you paint?"

"Certainly; but I am afraid it would affect your pose, and so I'll tell you the story before we start work."

During the recital he watched her closely. Her features betrayed no emotion until he reached that part of it where the master nails the pupil to the cross. Then they showed absorbing interest, and at the end of the story she dropped her shapely head

and allowed her chin to rest in her palm while her upturned eyes were fixed on him with a peculiar expression. A slight twitching of the corners of her mouth revealed a suppressed excitement.

There were a few moments of deep silence after Brush had finished the story. At last the artist broke the hush.

"Can you guess, Carmelina, why I told you this improbable tale?"

"No; for if you had the intention of doing something like that to me, you would certainly not have told me it. Besides, I don't think you could ever do such a thing—could you?" She smiled confidingly as her glance met his.

"Certainly not," he replied with emphasis.

"But while you told the story," she resumed, "the idea came to me that it wouldn't be much of a sacrifice if I allowed you to really cause me some pain if that would help you finish your picture. I have noticed that you are not well satisfied with it, and I believe it is mainly my fault."

"And you think for a moment that I would accept such a proposition? It was childish of me to tell you this crazy tale, but I wondered whether it would frighten you."

"I could never be afraid of you in that way," she protested artlessly. "But I mean what I said. If it will assist you in improving your painting, signor, I'll let you touch my foot with something hot. See,

there is an iron poker,"—she pointed to the fireplace—"and all you have to do is to heat it over a gas jet while I take off my shoe."

The artist in Brush was battling with the man. He felt sure that Carmelina was in earnest and that, to aid him, she was ready to have a painful burn inflicted on her person, but, while he dwelt for a moment on the happy result for his "Joan of Arc" this sacrifice would probably mean, all his humane feeling revolted against it.

"I will not do it," he said at last, "it would be a crime."

"But I want you to, and if you don't do it yourself, I will." She proceeded to slip off one of her shoes and a rough stocking, and exposed her brown shapely foot, unmarred by the calouses and deformities caused by the feminine footwear of higher civilization.

Brush realized that she was determined and yielded to her will. "Well, if you insist in such decided manner," he said hesitatingly, "I suppose I have to accept your sacrifice, but you must allow me, at least, to well compensate you for it."

"No, no; this is not done for money," she objected; "you are paying me well for my services, as it is."

He looked at her with undisguised admiration. "She surely has the stuff of a Roman maiden in her, the stuff that the Cloelias and Lucretias were made

of," he thought as he, still waveringly, lit a flame and heated the poker over it. Withal the artist in him felt elated at the undreamed of opportunity of finishing his picture under such favorable circumstances.

She had again assumed her pose against the column which supported the studio light, and was waiting. The iron was hot now and showed a roseate hue as Brush approached her with it. For a moment he looked pensively at the brown satin of her instep which the lower edge of her skirt left exposed, then he slowly lowered the point of the iron to within an inch or two of the skin. As he was about to touch it, he withdrew the instrument with an exclamation. "I can't do it."

"Well, let me have the poker, and you go to the easel, signor."

He hesitated somewhat confused. "Let me have it—quick, before it gets cold," she repeated, stretching out her arm.

In his bewilderment he held out the hot end of the iron which she, just as unthinkingly, grabbed.

"O, Dio!"

The poker dropped to the floor, and Carmelina involuntarily raised the injured hand to her lips and sucked her fingers. Brush stood looking at her somewhat sheepishly.

"You'd better hurry to your easel, signor," she repeated rather petulantly. "It hurts badly and you

should take advantage of it. It's just as well as if it were my foot, I think."

It was not necessary now for Carmelina to simulate pain, as the twitching of her face and the injured hand proved, which, every little while, she instinctively started to raise to her lips.

He woke as if from a dream. "Good, good! That is the right expression, and I am sure I can transfer it to my canvas." He hastily picked up his brushes and his palette and placed himself before the easel. Once more the instinct of the artist was foremost in him.

"The expression is good," remarked Brush enthusiastically, "if you only can keep it."

"Keep it? I couldn't help keeping it; it hurts so."

He flung his utensils on the table. "What a brute I am! I never thought of your pain, Carmelina. I only had my picture in mind." He rushed towards her.

"Stop—stop, signor. It doesn't matter, but you should paint as long as I feel the pain severely."

He picked up the poker from the rug, where a fine curl of smoke and an acrid odor betrayed that the iron was burning a hole in it, and threw it into the fire place. Then he hurried again to his easel.

For half an hour Brush worked hard, not giving his model the usual rest, and Carmelina, though tired and suffering from the painful burn, faithfully kept her pose without asking for a respite. Then he

stopped with an exclamation of extreme satisfaction. What he had sought to give his "Maid of Orleans" was there. The lacking quality had been supplied, and what he had long seen pictured in his imagination he now beheld expressed on the canvas before him. He stepped back from the easel to finally study the effect, and then he called Carmelina to him.

She approached and, for the moment, a look of curiosity replaced the expression of suffering in her features.

"I have finished," he said triumphantly, "and am satisfied. How do you like it now?"

Both gazed silently at the painting for a minute or two. Then he put his hand on her arm and asked "Can you see the difference?"

"I don't know enough, signor, to express an opinion," she replied modestly, "but if you are pleased, I am glad of what I did."

In his joy and satisfaction over the finished work he had, once more, forgotten her injury. "How thoughtless of me to forget that poor wounded hand," he ejaculated with deep sympathy, looking at the member which she held by the wrist under her chin. "You must let me see it."

He led her to a chair by the window and examined the burns. The palm and three fingers had been severely blistered. She allowed herself to be con-

ducted to the washbasin where he let the cold water flow over the injured hand.

"Ah, how good this feels," she said as the cooling liquid softened the burning pain.

"But the relief is only temporary. You must let me take you to a physician."

"Oh, no; it is really not necessary. I have never been to one before, and mother has at home a fine remedy for burns."

He argued with her, but she refused with firmness all medical aid.

"But you must permit me, at least, to bandage your hand before you leave," he insisted.

To this she consented, and he hastened to the nearest drug store for a soothing salve, after he had looked in vain for some pure oil among his bottles.

He hadn't thought of surgical bandages, and when he returned he tore a handkerchief in strips. She silently held out the wounded member, and he dressed it with infinite care. Then, as he leaned over the bandaged hand, he kissed the finger tips before she had a chance to withdraw them, as one kisses the hurt of a child to pacify it.

"No, no," she objected, "it is not for a *signor* to kiss the hand of a poor girl."

She wanted to leave now, but he retained her under various pretexts. He had come to find the company of this unsophisticated country girl attractive, and he never thought of treating her with the flip-

pancy which he exhibited towards the ordinary female model. Her very innocence had been her best safeguard against Brush whose sensual temperament frequently led him to a passing intimacy with good-looking models, but who was man enough to respect Carmelina when he suspected her love for him and found that her virtue really depended on his honor. He was extremely fond of her, but, true to his principles, he kept his heart intact and had enough control of his feelings not to fall in love with her.

At noon she left the studio.

She had hardly gone when Brush received the visit of a man with whom he and Oldfield had lately become acquainted, and whose personality very much interested him, not only from an artistic point of view, but on account of the mystery which surrounded it. Mr. Jinradasa was a full-blooded Hindoo whose voluminous yellow turban contrasted strangely with his otherwise European costume. He had been in Naples for several months and was sometimes seen in company of an old Yogi who lived with him, apparently in a subordinate position, at a hotel on the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele. No one was acquainted with his circumstances or the object of his stay, but he appeared to be a man of means and had the manners of a gentleman.

Jinradasa's favorite topic of conversation was the occult sciences, and Brush who, even before meeting him, was interested in the subject, frequently passed

hours in his company. The Hindoo possessed a good general education and spoke a fluent English and a fairly good Italian, both, however, with a pronounced accent. He seemed to have taken a fancy to Brush and, occasionally paid him a visit at the studio.

"I have come to take you to luncheon," he greeted him, holding out a long bony hand which Brush shook heartily.

"I was just thinking of luncheon myself, and will be with you in a minute. Just want to change my coat." He stepped into his bedroom, while Jinradasa inspected the painting on the easel.

"I see you have finished your 'Maid of Orleans,' " he remarked when Brush appeared again.

"Yes, but I should never have been able to do it to my satisfaction if it hadn't been for the devotion of my model." And, at the Hindoo's casual question, he related the incident of the morning.

"It was really not necessary for the girl to injure herself for the purpose," said Jinradasa, combing his black, parted beard with his thin fingers, while his dark, piercing eyes again gazed at the picture.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the whole action could have been suggested to her hypnotically and even with better result. Why didn't you call on me?"

"I never thought of such a thing."

"But you know that such an experiment is only the Alpha of hypnotism."

"I do, but I should still have hesitated to employ these means for my end, even had I thought of your powers in this connection."

"And why?"

"Because the poor girl has, probably, no idea of such a thing as hypnotism and, under the circumstances, I do not believe in the employment of it. As it is, I am of the opinion that this occult power should only be used in the service of medical science."

"You are a layman and know little of the uses and possibilities of a science in which we Hindoos have been adepts for centuries."

"I would like to know more about it. It is an interesting subject."

"We'll talk of it at luncheon."

X

FIST AND STILETTO

Mrs. Emory, Lucile and Oldfield were at the Villa Ferrari. A week or more had passed since their removal from the hotel and things, in general, had settled down to a quiet daily routine. Once or twice a week Oldfield visited Naples, while Pompeii and Herculaneum claimed his attention the other days. To these places he was frequently accompanied by Lucile who delighted in watching the work of the excavators. Brush had been at the villa twice for dinner and had occupied the guest room for a night.

He was again expected this afternoon. It was the day appointed by him, with the consent of Oldfield, on which the meeting with Paolo was to take place. It was still early and neither Paolo nor Brush had, as yet, arrived. Mrs. Emory and Lucile were seated in the shade of the *pergola,* while Oldfield had retired to his room after luncheon to "take the kinks" out of a puzzling inscription, as he expressed it. The old lady was bent over a bit of fancy work and the young woman was reading.

"Where have you been with John this morning?" Mrs. Emory interrupted the silence.

Lucile looked up from her book. "Nowhere in particular. We just strolled along the country roads. It's a holiday, you know, and there is no work going on at any of the places we usually visit."

"Do you know, child, that you are a puzzle to me. I don't know whether you really take interest in his work or whether it is the lack of other distraction that, apparently, makes you find pleasure in his company."

"I must confess that the ennui of this place is at times rather depressing. With all the beauty of the surroundings, I feel sometimes a desire for a little excitement, but I am really attracted by the romantic side of archæology and John is entertaining when he talks on that subject."

"Is that the only time when you find him interesting?"

Lucile kept silent for a moment and looked at the old lady as if trying to discover the object of her quizzing. Then she said: "You know, Mrs. Emory, John isn't what most girls would call good company. He is not much of a conversationalist when it comes to subjects that the average young woman likes, but there is something about him that is nevertheless attractive."

"I was in hopes, Lucile, that your daily contact with him would not only make you fond of each

other, but that I would have the pleasure of seeing a warmer feeling grow up between you."

"Mrs. Emory!"

"Now don't think I am a schemer, child, and that I want to exert undue pressure in your private affairs, but you two being the only persons in the world I am closely interested in, I must say that nothing would make me happier than to see you husband and wife, if you could get to love each other."

Lucile blushed deeply. "But that is a matter which has to develop by itself, if it is to come at all," she replied in an embarrassed tone.

"Neither do I want to force it, dear, but girls are apt to judge a man lightly and only by his social talents, and there is much in John that is hidden to superficial observers."

"If only he weren't such a matter-of-fact man. Not a bit of romanticism about him."

"But he is a *man* and that's worth more."

"I realize that and think a great deal of him; much more, for example, than of Mr. Brush whose personality and ways, however, would appeal far more to the average young girl than those of John."

"I am glad of it, for I am sure John shows in his attitude towards you a radical change from his former ways and, if I am not mistaken, with a man of his character this means something."

Lucile was about to answer when she saw Brush approach the *pergola* from the gate. She was glad

of the opportunity to end the conversation which had become embarrassing to her and welcomed the young artist with cordiality. At the sound of his voice Oldfield, too, emerged from his room.

After greetings and a short general conversation Brush took John aside. "The Italian hasn't shown up yet, I suppose?" he asked.

"No."

"I thought so. I hurried to be here at the meeting. Where will we receive him?"

"In the garden. There is no other convenient place. But as to your being present at our meeting, you'll have to excuse me, Bob, if I insist on settling the matter without your assistance."

"I thought it might avoid friction."

"How often shall I tell you that you invest the fellow and the whole transaction altogether with too much importance. You don't know his ilk as well as I do."

"Let me tell you, John, this man isn't an ordinary proletarian. You'll have to treat him with care. I am inclined to think that he has a violent temper and is of a revengeful character. In fact, I know it."

"That is of no interest to me whatever."

At this moment Paolo could be seen through the iron fence walking towards the villa with rapid strides. He stopped at the gate and rang the bell. A servant answered it, but before she had time to question him, Oldfield had walked out in the gravel path

and ordered his admittance. With a short nod of the head he answered Paolo's *buon giorno* and conducted him to a secluded spot in the garden, near the rear fence.

As they walked past the *pergola,* Lucile recognized the Italian with some astonishment. "Why, there is the handsome young man again that we saw a week or so ago when we rented the villa," she exclaimed to Brush. "An interesting type. I can't help admiring him."

"He is a rather good-looking man," interposed Mrs. Emory.

"I agree with you that he is a fine-looking chap, Miss Penrose," assented Brush, "but, aside from this, I do not find him especially interesting. He would make a fine model, that's about all."

"Have you ever used him for that?"

"I have asked him to pose for me, but so far he has not availed himself of my invitation."

"Perhaps he is too proud to do it?"

"May be."

"I wonder what business John has with him," remarked Mrs. Emory.

"I believe the Italian came about some art object that John bought of him some time ago," replied Brush lightly.

"Perhaps about that beautiful cameo he showed me?" asked Lucile with interest.

"Did he show you the cameo?" he answered evasively with another question.

"The one of Messalina?"—He nodded—"Isn't it a remarkable work of art?"

"Beyond praise."

"It must be of great value. He never told me, though, how he came by it."

"Under no romantic circumstances whatever, as you may suspect. I was with him when we chanced to meet the man who had found it."

"And that man was the young Italian he is with now—wasn't he?. I scent some mystery in this."

Brush admitted that it was Paolo who had sold the cameo to Oldfield, but denied any mysterious circumstances in connection with the purchase. Seeing that John, aside from having shown Miss Penrose the stone, had not told her anything as to the manner in which he had acquired it, he preferred not to be drawn out further and discreetly switched to another subject which Mrs. Emory just then brought on the tapis.

Oldfield seated himself when he reached a stone table in the shade of a walnut tree where, generally, the afternoon tea was served for the ladies, and motioned Paolo to another chair opposite him.

"Well," he began the conversation, "what can I do for you?"

Paolo looked at him for a moment before answering, then he said quietly: "I suppose you know what

I came here for, signor; your friend must have told you what business I had with you before you consented to see me."

"He has; and I want to be short about the matter when I ask again what can I do for you?"

"You can do the right thing by paying me the real value of the stone you took from me, or give it back to me."

"I *took* from you?" John drawled. "Let's understand each other. You mean the stone I *bought* from you?"

"You may consider it so, signor, but I differ with you." He said it impatiently. "At any rate you cannot deny that you took advantage of my ignorance when you threw down your eleven liras for something that is probably worth as many thousands."

"I did not know then fully what the object you sold me was. You had to take your chances the same as I did."

"But you didn't even give me a chance to object."

"We'll not debate that any further. Tell me what your idea of a settlement is; but mind you, whatever I may be inclined to do in the matter will be done not in recognition of any right you claim, but simply as a gift presented at the instance of my friend."

"As a gift? I am not a beggar, signor. I claim my right." Paolo put his hands on the edge of the table and leaned toward Oldfield with indignation.

The latter was beginning to show signs of impatience, but his frown had no effect on the Italian who looked expectantly at him and who, after a few moments, when he failed to answer, asked bluntly: "What do you expect to do?"

Oldfield subdued with an effort his rising temper and replied calmly: "A proposition ought to come from your side since you pretend to know the value of the stone. Let's be short. Name your figure."

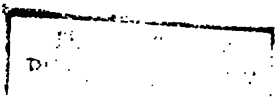
Paolo, like most ignorant foreigners, had an exaggerated idea as to the average wealth of Americans, and his avarice and suspicion made him hesitate naming a sum, always fearing of getting the worst of the deal. At last he blurted out: "Ten thousand liras."

Oldfield rose with a sarcastic smile. "Is that all?" he asked. "Why, you must have wheels in your head." He turned to leave.

Paolo, too, had pushed his chair back. "No, I am not crazy," he exclaimed with violence. "I only want justice and—*per Bacco,* I propose to get it."

"And how, if you please?" Oldfield stopped at the threatening tone of his voice and faced him again, this time with an angry glare in his eyes.

The jeering question aroused the Italian's ire to a still higher pitch, and he did not pay any attention to the danger signal. "How?" he hissed between his teeth; "You will soon know how, you—you—American swindler."



HE QUICKLY SQUARED HIMSELF TO RECEIVE THE ATTACK OF THE FURIOUS ITALIAN.— *Page 153.*

With a leap Oldfield was in front of him and swung his fist heavily at his face. Paolo had time to jump aside, avoiding the rush, and he missed, at the same time falling over the Italian's foot which had treacherously tripped him.

Before his adversary could follow his advantage by hurling himself on him with a short stiletto he had drawn from the breast of his coat, he was up again and about to rush once more. This time, however, the trained athlete asserted himself and, recognizing the disadvantage of fighting with bare fists against a blade, he quickly squared himself to receive the attack of the now furious Italian.

The two men were nearly of the same height, the native being of only little lighter build and shorter stature, but Oldfield's longer reach and skill in the manly art were not altogether unfavorably matched against the superior agility and the weapon of the other.

With blazing eyes Paolo drew back his arm and made a spring for the American's throat. His white teeth were exposed with a snarl as he launched his lithe body forward and struck.

John had regained his *sang froid* and dodged nimbly. With good judgment of distance he shot out his right fist with tremendous force and caught Paolo a heavy blow on the side of the head. The blow, however, was a glancing one and the latter gathered himself quickly. He whirled about and

made a new spring, the blade catching this time Oldfield's sleeve and ripping it open from the elbow without grazing the skin. In return he received a crashing blow in the ribs which did not check his rage, but made him more cautious.

He changed his tactics, retreated a few feet and moved crouchingly in a half circle around the American. Both watched each other alertly. Suddenly Paolo again leaped forward with lowered head and attempted to strike. Oldfield met the attack half way and drove his fist to the pit of his stomach. It made him reel backward and doubled him up. Before he had time to recover from this painful blow John grasped his wrist in a powerful grip, closing at the same time the fingers of his other hand around his throat. For a minute or two they wheeled about in a circle, then Paolo dropped on his knees, the dagger fell from his nerveless hand and his face became purple under the continued strangulation of the iron grasp.

With a sudden push Oldfield threw him on his back and grabbed the stiletto. Then, as he still gasped, he placed the weapon to his throat. "I could kill you now," he said calmly, "and you'd fully deserve it for your cowardly attack with a dagger, but I suppose a man of your ilk does not know what it means to fight fairly. So I'll let you off. However, don't show your face here again. You might not fare so well next time."

Paolo rose silently and somewhat dazed and brushed the dust from his trousers. "You had the best of me this time," he said slowly, "but you will hear from me again."

"I do not fear the threats of a coward," replied Oldfield contemptuously, "and to prove it to you—here is your dagger." He flung the blade on the ground and, pulling a couple of goldpieces from his pocket, threw them beside it. "Take them too," he added jeeringly, "*per maccaron* for your good intentions; and now off with you."

The Italian picked up his stiletto, but paid no attention to the money and slowly passed out of the grounds without throwing a glance in the direction of the *pergola* where Brush and the ladies were still talking. Oldfield watched him at a distance until he had closed the gate behind him, then he entered the house by a rear door and went to his room to change his coat and to efface the traces of the struggle.

When he appeared again in the *pergola* not even a flush of his face betrayed that he had just emerged from a dangerous encounter. Still Brush suspected that the meeting had not resulted satisfactorily and that something unusual had happened. He had noticed the sinister look of Paolo when he passed out of the gate and turned for a moment to glance back into the garden, and had also remarked that Oldfield reappeared with another coat and consider-

ably after the former's departure. Whether Lucile, too, had observed these indications was not apparent.

Brush used the opportunity to quiz John when the ladies retired for a moment preparatory to going into the garden where tea was to be served. "Things did not come off quite smoothly, I dare say," he asked, taking his arm as they walked along the gravel path to the table under the walnut tree. "I judge so from Aratta's looks when he left," he added tentatively when Oldfield did not answer immediately.

"I told you before that I doubted your wisdom of arranging this meeting."

"What happened?"

"It turned out as I expected. He asked for an exorbitant sum."

"How much?"

"Ten thousand liras."

Brush whistled softly. "Nothing small about him," he said. "And what offer did you make?"

"None whatever. I told him he was crazy."

"And then?"

Oldfield related the fight and Paolo's parting threat.

"And he didn't take the money, you say," Brush asked when he had finished.

"It's the only thing that was admirable in his whole action. It shows some pride."

"Well, I am sorry at the outcome. As I suspect from indications I had of Aratta's character, this isn't the last of the affair."

Brush rightly surmised that the Italian, recognizing the physical superiority of his adversary, and with the cunning of his race, had only temporarily retired from the field to await a more opportune moment for his revenge. He did not look exactly for a tragic finale of the situation, but he felt uneasy and expressed his fear of possible danger from that side in frank terms.

"I suppose you see now stilettos for me in every nook and corner," smiled Oldfield who received his warnings with some skepticism, "but I know these poltroons better. I dare wager that in a short time one of his friends will appear with an offer to take whatever the gracious *eccellenza* will condescend to give as a gratuity on top of the bargain—that is if we hear from friend Aratta at all. In my opinion he is a stupendous bluffer who allowed his temper to get the best of him and who is, even now, sorry that he did not pick up the gold I flung to him."

XI

IN THE SHADOW OF DANGER

Paolo left the Villa Ferrari in a state of mind which, for the moment, prevented him from thinking of anything else but revenge. He walked along the road toward Torre Annunziata revolving in his head various schemes as to the form in which to take it, but he arrived at the Osteria Palestra, his home, without having come to a definite conclusion.

He had considered himself deeply injured by the theft of his cameo—in which light he regarded the transaction—and the result of his encounter with Oldfield had added new fuel to his hatred of him. It humiliated him, too, that the American, unarmed, had not only ignominiously repulsed his attack with the stiletto, but had contemptuously refrained from using his advantage when he was at his mercy.

Paolo possessed many characteristics of the proletarian, but they were strongly mixed with others more generally attributed to the higher classes of society than to the stratum of which he was a member. Conspicuous among these qualities were his intelligence and pride, both of which were said, by

those who knew him best, to be the heritance of an aristocratic father.

It was a matter of general knowledge in Torre Annunziata that he was the illegitimate son of a reckless nobleman and an only daughter of Giovanni Palestra, who had died while giving life to him. The grandparent, however, had always posed as his godfather, and it was in this relation that he was usually spoken of by his friends and acquaintances. Nevertheless Paolo was acquainted with the circumstances of his birth and shared with old Palestra a deep hatred for the privileged classes. Both were members of one of the several Italian secret societies that are in continuous warfare against law, order and society.

Palestra was seated with several companions at a table in front of his inn when he noticed the approach of his grandson, and surmised from his deliberate steps and whole bearing that the mission in which he had gone to Torre del Greco had failed of its purpose. He rose and preceded him into the low living apartment behind the barroom.

"I am hot and thirsty," remarked Paolo, throwing off his coat and hat and dropping into a braided straw chair.

The old man brought a bottle of Chianti and set it on the table, after filling two glasses.

"E bene," he said, taking a chair opposite him,

"your appearance does not suggest any favorable news."

Paolo took a long draught and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand before replying: "I never trusted that smooth-faced *figlio d'un cano* to do the right thing."

"So you didn't come to an agreement at all?"

"Why, he didn't even make a counter proposition to my demand."

"How much did you ask?"

"Ten thousand liras, as you advised me to."

"I had an idea that he might not listen to that proposition, but it was all right to make it so as to have some margin to come down."

"Come down? Why, I never got a chance for another word after mentioning that sum. He laughed and turned to leave, calling me crazy."

"And what did you do?"

"I was so angry that I called him a swindler."

"That spoiled it. I wouldn't have done that."

"Neither should I; but I didn't stop to consider. and his jeering manner roused my temper."

"And he took the insult?"

"Nothing of the sort. He jumped at me like an enraged tiger and I had to draw my stiletto."

"There was no blood spilled—was there?"

"There would have been if it had depended on me."

"How is that?"

"Did you ever hear of the American way of fighting—what they call boxing? Yes? Well, so did I, but I'd never have believed that a man with only his fists can get the better of another one armed with a stiletto."

"Tell me about it."

"I am not in the mood now. We'd better consider what next to do."

Palestra rose from his chair and closed the connecting door between the barroom. Then ensued between the two a whispered conversation which lasted for more than half an hour, ending, apparently, in a satisfactory conclusion.

Next morning Paolo, in pursuance of a settled plan, started to secretly observe the Villa Ferrari. He never approached the grounds closely from the front, which was too open for successful spying, but he was, nevertheless, able to watch from a distance the coming and going of its inhabitants without being noticed himself.

The wooded lane in the rear of the house from which he could oversee a large part of the garden was his favorite lookout. He soon noticed that the ladies and Oldfield usually spent the later afternoon hours there, and that Brush often joined them evenings. From his hiding place, the thick foliage of an old tree, he could even overhear their conversation at tea, but this was no advantage to him, as it was carried on in English.

In the morning Paolo noticed Oldfield leave the villa and walk either in the direction of Pompeii or Herculaneum, accompanied by Lucile, or take the train, alone, to Naples. He did not follow him to the city, but had two or three times convinced himself from a safe distance that the excavation works were invariably the objective point of his matitudinal walks.

These roads being much frequented, a favorable opportunity for the execution of his plans in daytime seemed to be out of question, but Paolo soon found out that Oldfield sometimes left the house evenings alone, or with Lucile, for a stroll along the sea shore.

The way from the Villa Ferrari to the bay led through streets that were almost deserted at night, as was the favorite place at the water front where the young American either smoked his pipe in meditative solitude, or from which he rowed out in one of the small fisher boats with his lady companion. The opportunity for a treacherous attack was favorable in both places, but it was not assassination that had been planned by Paolo and his grandfather.

The latter's advice had prevailed against the young man's wild desire for violent revenge, and an abduction for the purpose of a heavy ransom, which should more than make up for the imagined loss in the cameo deal, had been decided upon. In this undertaking they were to receive the support of the

secret society of which they were members, and Paolo was about to make preparations for the ambush when another idea struck him.

He had suspected lovers' relations between Oldfield and Lucile when he had first seen them in the automobile on the day they had rented the Villa Ferrari. His secret observations convinced him now that his adversary was at least infatuated with the young woman, if she was not engaged to him. "How," he thought from his native point of view, "could she otherwise go out alone with him, and evenings at that."

Lucile had strangely impressed the Italian, and the thought that she belonged or was to belong to Oldfield stung him with envy, although he did not dream of the possibility of interposing himself between them. It was this feeling of envy that originated the new scheme which struck him when he saw the young woman one afternoon reading at the stone table in the garden.

She was alone on that occasion, and he had watched her for a long time from behind a tree outside the wall. He was so fascinated by the exotic type of her beauty, the easy grace of her poise and, especially, by the golden shimmer of her bronze hair, which was caressingly touched by a ray of the sun, that, for a time, he became oblivious of the purpose of his watch.

Suddenly the thought flashed through his mind

that by striking Oldfield through his love, the blow dealt would be felt much keener than on his own person, while the financial result would in no way be impaired. The chances for a heavier ransom might even be enhanced with a hostage, such as she was, in jeopardy.

He was still considering the new scheme when a clamor in the wooded lane ahead of him distracted his attention from his thoughts. Lucile, too, looked up from her book and listened. The noise came nearer, and one could now plainly distinguish shouts of "mad dog—mad dog!" Paolo did not move from his point of observation, but Lucile stepped to the garden wall and peered through the iron fence.

At this moment a small dog, with white slaver dripping from his open mouth and pursued by a number of men and half grown boys, appeared around the bend. The animal was nearly exhausted and, apparently, hesitated a while, uncertain as to the direction in which to continue its flight. This wavering sufficed to bring close the host of pursuers and the dog, realizing the danger, leaped on the low wall of the villa and tried to squeeze through the pikes of the fence. Its body was slender, but not sufficiently to allow its passage, and it was caught by the shoulders in the iron trap after having pushed its head and fore paws through the opening.

The crowd was about to kill it with clubs when Paolo rushed from his place behind the tree and interfered.

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"IT WAS KIND OF YOU TO SAVE THE POOR ANIMAL," SHE SAID.— *Page 165.*

"Don't you fellows see that the beast isn't mad," he exclaimed; "it simply has been frightened and the long run has caused it to foam at the mouth." He extricated the dog from its position and took it in his arms. It howled and whined pitifully, but did not even attempt to snap at its rescuer.

Lucile, who had at first retreated from the wall in fright approached now and added her appeal to that of Paolo. The crowd, convinced, by the action of the little animal, that it had made a mistake withdrew, and Paolo was about to do the same when he was arrested by the young lady.

"It was kind of you to save the poor animal," she said, and before he could answer she added: "You are the young man who was at the villa some days ago and had an interview with Mr. Oldfield—aren't you?" Her Italian had considerably improved during her stay in Naples and she expressed herself quite fluently.

"I am," he replied, surprised at her use of the vernacular, releasing at the same time the dog.

"I would like to speak to you."

"I am at your service, signorina." He removed his hat, exposing the beauty of his black hair, and stood expectantly before her.

She saw a chance to solve the mystery which had excited her curiosity and, grasping one of the pikes that separated her from Paolo, leaned forward. "May I ask what the subject of your conversation was?"

"Don't you know?"

"No; but I presume it was about a carved stone he bought from you. Wasn't it?"

"Yes; about the cameo he stole from me."

"You don't mean to say that he stole it from you," she protested indignantly.

"It is exactly as I said, signorina, though he won't acknowledge it."

"Won't you explain a little more in detail? I can't believe that Mr. Oldfield is guilty of such a thing."

Now it was not mere curiosity anymore that made her desirous to know more of the matter, but the wish to get full information about an affair which threw an unenviable light on the character of a man whose friendship she valued. She could not believe him guilty of a dishonest action and was sure that there was a mistake somewhere.

Paolo was at first undecided as to his course, but after short consideration related to her the meeting on the road of Bosco Reale and the subsequent effort of Brush to have the matter settled between him and Oldfield.

Lucile became thoughtful. All the circumstances of the case which she had had a chance to observe pointed to the truthfulness of Paolo's statement, but she could not persuade herself to believe that Oldfield had knowingly taken advantage of the Italian's ignorance.

"Are you sure he knew the value of the stone when he threw down his eleven liras for it?" she asked after he had finished.

"If he did not, he suspected it at least, for he never gave me a chance to refuse or accept. I am as sure of that as I am of the fact that I would never have done such a thing, though I am only a poor man," he answered impressively.

He looked appealingly at her with his dark lustrous eyes, the flame of which strangely enchanted her. His foreign masculine beauty affected her in the same way as hers had touched him. It was the physical contrast that attracted them to each other, the strong magnetism of sex that does not know any difference of birth and social standing, that bridges any gulf yawning between those that come within the influence of its poles, and which only the strongest characters can resist.

Under the fascinating gaze of Paolo's eyes Lucile was forced to lower hers. "And did he refuse to give the cameo back to you or pay you an adequate price for it?" she queried with a slight tremble of her voice.

Paolo did not answer immediately. He did not care to relate the humiliating circumstances of his encounter with Oldfield, being ashamed of his physical inferiority the truthful recital would have revealed. He had a vague idea that this would lower him in her eyes and, in his pride, he did not wish to

appear unequal to the man whom he imagined she loved.

"I do not care to say more about this," he said at last. "He is your *amoroso*, I believe."

Lucile looked up in astonishment. "He is not," she denied the insinuation. "Only a friend. But what difference would that make?"

"Well, signorina, I would not like to lower a man in the esteem of the woman whom he loves, even if he were my enemy." The answer was diplomatically intended to raise himself in her eyes, while it plainly inferred that Oldfield had not acted correctly.

She was surprised at his apparent delicacy. "Then you may tell me all about it," she pressed, "for, as I said, our relations are only those of friends."

"Even so I do not want to speak about the matter."

"You are not what you seem to be, signor,—a laborer or artisan?" she asked, her curiosity aroused by his manner.

"Perhaps not," he replied mystifyingly, "but that would anyway not be of interest to a lady like you." He fastened his burning glance on her and, once more, she had to lower her lids before its intense glow.

"It may," she said smilingly after a while. "You see, I am a woman and curious. Aren't your Italian women the same?"

"Well, signorina—" He looked at her questioningly.

"Penrose," she interposed, guessing his desire to know her name. "And may I know yours?"

"I thought you knew it. My name is Paolo Aratta."

"A romantic name, fitting its bearer," she thought. Then aloud: "Please finish what you wanted to say."

"I was going to say that the story is too long to tell just now. Perhaps I'll tell it to you on another occasion."

"But I may not be here much longer."

"Oh, I will see you again," he said meaningly. "However, if you care enough, I shall attend high mass to-morrow at a church near Pompeii—you know the one where they have the fine choir—and if you'll come there my story may be worth while your trouble."

"I will probably be in that neighborhood to-morrow," she half assented, thinking of Oldfield's intention of spending the forenoon in Pompeii where some new mosaics and frescoes had been unearthed, "and if I think of it, I may see you. I love good church music anyway."

"She'll be there," thought Paolo, "if I know women; for after all, she cannot be different in that respect from others of her sex.—And now I must be off, if you permit me," he said aloud.

"Addio!"

Lucile returned thoughtfully to her book, but sank into a deep revery instead of continuing her reading.

XII

THE MEETING

Brush had been urgently invited by Oldfield to view with him the new art finds at Pompeii, which he thought of special interest to the artist, and he arrived early at the Villa Ferrari. Lucile, as usual, was of the party, and after a pleasant walk they entered the site of the ruins by way of the ancient Porta Marina, the principal entrance, near the Hotel Diomed. Oldfield was well known to the guards, and he and his party were allowed the privilege to stroll through the streets of the dead city without the obligatory official guide, and visit the excavations from which ordinary sightseers are rigidly excluded.

The archaeologist led the way to the new discoveries which consisted of a marvelous mosaic of a Saturnalian feast and several interesting frescoes in colors which were as vivid and fresh as if they had been put on the wall yesterday instead of two thousand years ago.

Brush was delighted, and he and Oldfield waxed enthusiastic about the taste and technical skill of the ancient artists exhibited in the finds, while Lucile

quietly admired their beauty. Soon they got into an argument, and Lucile excused herself with the intention of roaming among the ruined streets, strolls which she delighted and generally indulged in when Oldfield was occupied with the more serious part of his work.

"I have enough now of *tempera* and other technic, of frescoes, mosaics, and the like, to last me for a while, gentlemen," she said laughingly; "so, if you will excuse me, I shall withdraw."

"You don't mean to go home, Lucile, do you?" asked Oldfield.

"No; though I really should. We leave Mrs. Emory alone too much, as it is. But I want to walk about the ruins and, later, I may go to hear some church music."

"Will you come back here?"

"I think not. I'll meet you, gentlemen, for lunch at the Hotel Diomed."

She proceeded leisurely through the narrow desolate streets, the pavement of which still shows plainly the deeply furrowed traces of chariot wheels and hoofs. Here and there she looked into a house whose roofless and dilapidated rooms were inhabited by scores of gray and green lizards, and the floors of which were overgrown with grass.

Sometimes she stopped to examine the remains of an ancient water conduit, consisting of broken lead-pipes, or she tried to make out the subject of a wall

painting from which large parts of the stucco had peeled off.

She visited the House of the Faun where the famous mosaic of the Alexander Battle was found, then that of Pansa, Salust and others, until she sat down to rest in the Villa Diomed which recalled to her memory the story of Glaucus, Iona and Nydia. It was there that she had re-read Bulwer's romance and where she loved to dream.

This morning, too, Lucile was in a dreamy, romantic mood. Since parting from Paolo the afternoon before, her thoughts had been much occupied by him, and his classical head with the dark burning eyes had even disturbed her sleep. She had dreamed of him, but the dream was not entirely a pleasant one. He had raised his arm and called her, and some magnetic force, of which she could give no account, compelled her to approach him against the warnings of an instinct which told her to flee. Then Oldfield appeared, and she was angry at his interference. At last she had walked off with Paolo.

Oldfield had also occupied her mind, but in a lesser degree. She had naturally not mentioned to him her chance meeting with the young Italian, as his evident evasion of questions where Paolo was concerned proved to her that the subject was an unpleasant one to him.

This fact gave her much to think now that she had heard Paolo's story. It made her positive that

the acquisition of the cameo by Oldfield must have been made in a manner which was, the least to say, doubtful. Not knowing all the circumstances, she could not, like Brush, make allowance for the collector's and scientist's point of view, and she became certain that Paolo had suffered moral and mental injury in the deal.

She had, however, not allowed her outward demeanor toward Oldfield to be visibly affected, and the slight coolness she showed in refusing, the evening before, his invitation for a stroll to the bay had hardly been noticed by him.

As she mused over the incident of yesterday and her dream, she tried to persuade herself that in meeting Paolo she wished only to satisfy her curiosity, but this sophistry did not convince her. She finally realized that it was a stronger feeling, a deep interest in the picturesque Italian, who had something of the romantic nimbus with which she surrounded the hero of her creation, that made the hour to high mass appear so long. At last she started for the church.

When Lucile entered the edifice, it was fairly thronged with worshipers among whom several tourists were scattered. The service had not yet begun, and she took a position at the base of a column from where she had a good view of the altar and the organ. The crowd consisted principally of women,

and she quickly noticed that Paolo was not among the small number of men.

The priest now entered from the sacristy, followed by his acolytes, swinging silver censers. The clouds issuing from the vessels filled the nave with the permeating odor of incense, and soon the organ pealed forth a sacred anthem.

At this moment she saw Paolo enter the church. He dipped his fingers into the font of holy water, made the sign of the cross, and bent his knee in the direction of the altar. Then he looked about and discovered Miss Penrose standing at the column. He approached her unobserved and with noiseless steps and took his position behind the same shaft.

"I am glad you came, signorina," he whispered from behind the broad hat which he held to his face.

"I told you I loved church music," she replied in the same undertone.

"So it is not my story that you came to hear?"

"I thought of that also, but this does not seem to be the proper place and time for it."

"It will be all right after the service."

A woman kneeling close by seemed to be disturbed by the whispering. She looked reproachfully at them, and they kept silent.

The argument between Oldfield and Brush lasted for nearly an hour after Lucile had left and threatened to become interminable when the artist finished it by saying: "It seems to me you are losing valuable

time, John. Didn't you say when we started out that you had certain work to do?"

"True; I forgot all about it. There are these damaged and unintelligible inscriptions which I have to decipher and to copy, and it will take me quite a while to do it."

"I'd better leave you then?"

"Not necessarily."

"Still, you'll work with less distraction."

"Well, then find Lucile, if you can, and we'll meet at the Diomed."

Brush started to discover Miss Penrose, but wandered vainly through the desolate streets and lanes in search of her. Near the Temple of Isis he heard his name called by a masculine voice and, turning around, was hailed by Mr. Stickney and Miss Dryden.

"How lucky to meet you here, Mr. Brush," exclaimed the latter. "Do you know that we called twice on you without finding you in?"

"I found your cards and was very sorry indeed to have missed your visit."

"I was just saying yesterday, I think, to Mr. Stickney that it was too bad that we didn't have a chance to be more frequently together with you and Mr. Oldfield. You know, we are going to leave to-morrow for an extended tour of northern Italy and the Riviera."

"I am sure Mr. Oldfield will regret to hear it, the

same as I do," replied Brush politely, but innerly glad to be relieved of the nightmare that oppressed him whenever he thought of a possible visit from the Stickney-Dryden party. "And where is Miss Carolyn?"

"She is a little bit under the weather," said Stickney apologetically. "That is the reason we are alone. You see, I hadn't visited Pompeii yet, and Miss Dryden was kind enough to accompany me. Isn't it an interesting place, though?"

"Very."

"Have you been here before?"

"Often."

"Then, I suppose, you wouldn't care very much to go over the place with us. We just came in, you know."

"I should be delighted, nevertheless, but I am searching for a young lady whom I must find soon."

"Young lady, eh?" chuckled Stickney. "Well, I hope you'll find her."

"Are you going to remain in Naples much longer?" inquired Miss Dryden.

"For a month or two, at any rate."

"Then I hope we'll see you on our return. We have arranged to sail back from Naples."

"Well, so long," said Stickney, "and give our regards to Mr. Oldfield.—I understand;" he added with a grin in an aside, "young lady—you are anxious."

They shook hands, and Brush turned toward the Porta Marina, while Stickney and Miss Dryden, with their guide, disappeared in the court of the Isis Temple.

Brush now remembered Lucile's remark about going to hear some church music and, knowing the church she likely meant, he left the ruins and wended his way in that direction.

He entered the edifice in the midst of high mass. The church now was crowded, and it was several minutes before he perceived Miss Penrose. Paolo, being hidden by the column, remained unobserved by him. Not wishing to call attention to himself, he decided to wait for the end of the service before approaching Lucile and listened attentively to the chants and the music.

"*Ite; missa est.*" The words dismissing the congregation were pronounced by the officiating priest before he looked again in the direction of the young woman. To his great astonishment he now saw Paolo at her side. The Italian leaned towards her and, apparently, whispered something behind his hat to which she assented by a nod of the head.

Brush was so surprised that he barely suppressed an exclamation. Then, without knowing why, he dropped into a low prayer chair which hid him from their view, but allowed him to observe the couple.

They sat down in one of the pews which the rapidly dispersing throng of worshipers were leaving.

She listened with deep interest to him and seemed only from time to time to interrupt him with a short question which he answered more with the vivid gestures of his race than with words. He spoke in a tone barely audible, and Brush was too far away to understand what he said.

The artist being sure that they knew each other only by sight, was puzzled as to the subject of their conversation. The meeting might have been a chance one, but what Paolo could have to say to Miss Penrose in this mysterious manner was more than an enigma to him.

Neither he nor Oldfield had seen the Italian since the violent scene in the garden of the Villa Ferrari and, while John had not given the matter any further thought, Brush had begun to believe that his fears were exaggerated. They were now renewed again, and he decided to watch.

Nearly half an hour passed before the young couple rose from the pew and left the church. At the door they parted, and Lucile left in the direction of the Hotel Diomed, while Paolo walked slowly towards Torre Annunziata.

Brush followed the latter after he had convinced himself that he could not be observed by Miss Penrose, and soon overtook him.

He seemed surprised at seeing the artist, but gave no evidence of hostile feelings. On the contrary, a self-satisfied smile played around his lips.

"Do you know the young lady to whom you spoke in church?" Brush ventured to ask tentatively after the usual exchange of greetings.

"Ah, you have seen us there?"

"By chance."

"Well, I happened to meet her the same way," lied Paolo. "She addressed me, and I recognized her at once as the young lady I had seen in the automobile the day I met you in Torre del Greco."

"And what did she say to you, if I may ask?"

"I don't know that you have a right to ask me that."

"None whatever, but it would interest me to know."

"I think you are a reasonable sort of man, and I don't mind telling you that she was eager to know in what manner the cameo got into the hands of your friend. I am sure now that she is his sweetheart. You remember I told you that he was too ugly to be her brother."

"You are sarcastic, Signor Aratta," replied Brush, "and I can see that you still entertain a grudge against Mr. Oldfield. You could have come, though, to an understanding with him, had you been reasonable."

"Reasonable? *Per Dio!* As if I hadn't been. But don't deceive yourself; I haven't forgotten him, nor my revenge, though he needn't be scared of his life. I have thought of that ordinary vengeance, but

changed my mind. I shall not kill him—no! My revenge will take another form, one that he will not forget all his life, if he lived as long as Methuselah."

Brush felt his anger rise, but restrained himself and rejoined suavely: "You talk like a member of the Camorra or Maffia, but you cannot make me believe that you are a bad man."

"I am not, signor, but that does not prevent my feeling an injury keenly, and having a desire to avenge it. *Addio!* We'll see each other again, I suppose." This significantly.

When Brush arrived at the Hotel Diomed he found Lucile and Oldfield seated in the dining room and awaiting him.

"Where have you been, old man," he was greeted by John. "I am famished, and here you let us wait an unreasonable length of time."

"I was looking for Miss Penrose."

"Never mind that, Don Juan," laughed Oldfield jokingly.

"Well, I hope at least you won't mind my looking *after* her," retorted Brush in the same spirit. "I see you don't do it." He seated himself, and poured a glass of wine for her which the waiter had just put on the table.

"I looked for you in the little church," he continued, wishing to see whether the remark would in any way affect her.

"I was there," she replied quietly enough, but with a touch of embarrassment in her countenance.

"I must have missed you."

"Evidently."

The luncheon, contrary to similar occasions, was a quiet affair. John spoke of his morning's work, but Lucile who, at other times, had always shown a vivid interest in it, was preoccupied. Frequently she fixed her glance on him with a peculiar expression when he wasn't aware of it. When he addressed her directly she, generally, avoided his eyes by busying herself with the viands on her plate.

Brush, too, was rather monosyllabic. He mused about the incident he had witnessed in the church and his subsequent conversation with Paolo, and remained a quiet observer. He was wondering whether the meeting with the Italian would in any way affect the relations of Lucile to John, and made up his mind to carefully watch affairs in general and, if occasion should demand, to play the part of *"deus ex machina."* To this effect he promised himself to be even a more frequent visitor to the Villa Ferrari than he had so far been.

Only at the end of the meal, when Gorgonzola and coffee were brought on the table, did Oldfield notice the unusual silence of his companions.

"I suppose I am boring you with my talk," he remarked.

"Not me," laughed Brush. "I was thinking of

something else, but may be Miss Penrose would enjoy an occasional change from the archaeological menu."

"Well, I was so pleased about this clew which I found in the mysterious inscription that I am sure she will excuse me—won't you, Lucile?—Tell you what, Bob, I feel good enough to race you home."

"You may race alone, if you care. I prefer to walk slowly with Miss Penrose."

"Not on your life. We'll walk together."

XIII

"CHERCHEZ LA FEMME"

Shortly after having finished his "Joan of Arc" Brush had arranged with a private gallery for an exhibition of the painting. The work was to be finally sent to compete for a *Salon* prize in Rome, but, there being sufficient time before the expiration of the submitting term, Bob acceded to the request of a firm of art dealers to show it in their rooms for a few weeks.

In agreeing to this demand Brush calculated that a private exhibition in the noted gallery of Fratelli Marchese would give him an opportunity of estimating his chances of success for the coveted prize.

From the first day "Joan of Arc" was always surrounded by hosts of admirers, and connoisseurs admitted that a new star, even one of the first magnitude, had risen on the horizon of art.

The happy artist paid frequent visits to the art rooms and, not being personally known, mingled freely with the throngs of visitors who came to see the painting of which the Neapolitan press spoke in such glowing terms. Thus he himself was enabled

to feel the pulse of public opinion on his work, and this opinion was so favorable that he felt highly elated at the outlook.

He was so happy during these moments that he entirely forgot Carmelina whose devotion had contributed so much to his success. At home, however, and when away from the art rooms, he often thought of the girl and, sometimes, he felt a strong impulse to take the Capri boat to see her or write to her for other sittings. He suppressed this desire by arguing with himself that it was better to avoid her altogether than to expose himself to further temptations which he might not always be able to resist.

To distract himself he started on another composition, and his sketching excursions in the city and its environs helped him not only to fill his portfolios, but to considerably wean his thoughts from Carmelina.

On the afternoon following the luncheon at the Hotel Diomed Brush was looking over some of his sketches when he came across a pencil drawing of the church in which he had observed the meeting of Paolo and Lucile. He started to ponder again over the possible effect of this incident on the relations of Miss Penrose to Oldfield when the ring of the bell interrupted him.

With an exclamation of annoyance he rose and opened the door. It was John. He appeared to

be laboring under a strong excitement, and his face was covered with perspiration which he nervously wiped from his forehead as he entered the studio and threw himself into a chair.

"What is it, old man?" queried Brush anxiously. "You look rather upset. Has something happened?"

Oldfield gazed at him for a while before answering. Then he rose impulsively and placed his hands on his shoulders. "There has," he replied, "and it's bad news too."

Brush imagined some of his fears of Paolo's vengeance realized and, discreetly avoiding a direct question, rather waiting for his confidences, he said soothingly: "Whatever it is, John, take it coolly."

"Why, the thing does not concern me as much as it does you, Bob."

The artist looked at him questioningly and with astonishment. "Me?"

"You."

"I don't understand. Explain yourself."

"I'll tell you, but I want you to heed your own advice. Don't take it too much to heart."

"For heaven's sake, what has happened?"

Oldfield dropped his arms from Brush's shoulders and took hold of one of his hands with both of his.

"It's a pretty severe blow, Bob, especially at this moment, but I expect you to stand up under it."

"I will, unless it is a sledge hammer blow. What in the world can it be that needs so much preparation? I am not an old woman—out with it!"

"Well, it's about your painting, your 'Joan of Arc.' It has been slashed in its frame by some criminal fool."

"Slashed in its frame? Do you mean cut out and stolen?" Brush turned pale as he took hold with his free hand of Oldfield's lapel.

"No; I mean just what I said. Your picture has been destroyed, sliced up like an orange."

The artist's face appeared livid now and he gasped, repeating the words: "Destroyed—sliced up like an orange." Then recovering somewhat, he asked: "But why should he seek to revenge himself on me?"

"Revenge? Who?"

"Paolo Aratta. It is he who did it—isn't it?"

"No; what makes you think of him?"

"Well, who then is it? I don't know of any enemy who would commit such an act of vandalism."

Brush released his hand from Oldfield's grasp and paced the floor with nervous strides. Then he pushed John into a chair and seated himself opposite him. "Tell me how it happened," he said curtly.

"I was not an eye witness to the deed, but was there in time to see the fellow arrested. You know, I had seen the picture only once since it was hung in the Marchese gallery and, passing by there about

half an hour ago on my way back from the National Museum, I stepped in to take another look at it.

"The room was crowded, and I had some trouble in getting near the painting. I stood there for a few minutes and, while admiring it with the rest, listened to the comments of the public which, without exception, were of the most laudatory description."

"Never mind that, John. What I want to hear now is how the thing occurred."

"As I told you, I wasn't present at the act. I had passed to the next room when I heard a commotion, and following the throng in the direction of it, reentered the hall in which your picture hangs. At first, I couldn't make out what the trouble was about, and the crowd was so thick that I couldn't get near to the center of the excitement which seemed to be in front of your painting. Then I heard a man exclaim: 'Why, some one has mutilated the picture 'Joan of Arc'.' "

"The scoundrel?" hissed Brush.

"I was thunderstruck, but when I recovered from the shock I pushed my way forward with knees and elbows until I stood before your work. It was only too true. The canvas had been cut into strips with a sharp instrument, and some of the shreds were hanging over the lower edge of the frame."

Brush's face changed color and turned a scarlet red. Oldfield stopped in his recital, worried at his appearance.

"Never mind me, John; go on."

"Taking my eyes from the picture, I noticed two employes of the house holding a young fellow, about twenty years old, by the nape of the neck and the shoulders. A large open jack knife lay at his feet. It was evidently the instrument with which the deed was done. The man didn't offer any resistance and, to judge by the expression of his face, he seemed to be pleased at the damage he had inflicted."

"What could have been his object—who was he?"

"I don't know, and no one else does so far, I believe."

"What did they do with him?"

"They had already sent for the police when I appeared on the scene, and when I introduced myself as your friend, I was asked to await the arrival of the officers. Meanwhile I, myself, put some questions to the fellow, but he was obdurate and, with the exception of expressing extreme satisfaction at his deed, I couldn't get anything out of him as to his identity or the object of his vandalism."

"He must be a lunatic," remarked Brush who had listened attentively, but had somewhat cooled down.

"I thought so too at first, but there was nothing in his appearance to support this assumption, and when the police arrived he acted rational enough in every way, persisting, however, in his refusal to disclose his identity and the object of the mutilation."

"How did he look?"

"Like a peasant or a man of the lower laboring class, though he was dressed in his best suit of clothes."

"Continue."

"There isn't much more to say. The officers asked for your name and address, took the names of several witnesses, and the fellow was taken to the lockup. Fratelli Marchese requested me to inform you of the incident, as they were too busy for the moment and had to go along with the culprit to be present at the first protocol."

There was a silence of several minutes, during which Brush sat with lowered head, his face buried in his hands, before it was broken by Oldfield.

"It's a hard blow, Bob, I know; a great setback just now, so shortly before the *Salon,* but you will bear it like a man."

Brush looked up. "The loss is irreparable," he said sadly.

"Why irreparable? You can paint the subject again."

"Never! I could not duplicate it with the same success. My heart wouldn't be in the work as it was in this."

"But you can have the same model and—"

"You can't know anything about my feelings, John," interrupted Brush gently, "or what is going on in an artist's soul under such a calamity."

"Cheer up anyway, old man."

"I must see the picture, or rather what remains of it. Will you come with me?" Brush rose and took his hat.

"On condition that you come with me to Torre del Greco afterwards. Aunt Clara spoke of asking you to stay with us for a few weeks."

"We'll see about that later."

They left the studio and took a cab to Fratelli Marchese's art rooms. The proprietors had meanwhile returned from the station and received the artist with expressions of the deepest regret.

"I assure you, signor," said one of them, "that we take every precaution for the safety of the art works entrusted to us. Some of our employés are always on guard, but this dastardly act was committed before anyone had a chance to interfere. The rooms were so crowded."

"I do not blame anyone," he replied, "but let me see the picture."

He was led to the hall the chief attraction of which had been his "Joan of Arc." The visiting hours of the gallery were over, and only Oldfield and the brothers Marchese were with him when he stood before his mutilated work.

He silently gazed at it for a long time, his hands folded in front of him. Then he picked up the shreds that hung over the lower edge of the frame. They were all that remained of the center figure which seemed to have been the principal point of the

attack. Two large cross cuts and several lengthwise gashes over face and body of the Maid had reduced the painting to a condition which defied the skill of the most expert restorer.

Two hot tears welled up in the eyes of the artist which he vainly tried to hold back. Slowly they rolled down his cheek and dropped on his hands. The others stood as in the presence of death, and no one ventured a word of consolation. His pain seemed to be such as to preclude, at this moment, any possibility of alleviation.

At last he turned to Oldfield. "Come on, John," he said quietly, but with determination in his eye, "I must see the fellow who did this and—shake the life out of him."

"You won't do anything of the sort, Bob. He is in the hands of the authorities now, and his crime is one that is severely punished here."

"Never severely enough. It is practically infanticide. Isn't my painting a child of my soul and brain?"

"Metaphorically yes, but the handiwork of a man can be replaced, while a lost life is irretrievable."

"At any rate, I must see the man."

"That ought to be easy enough. The official who has the matter in hand will probably be glad to confront you with him."

At headquarters they were received with consid-

eration, and a request for permission to see the culprit was readily granted by the official in charge.

When he appeared under the escort of an armed guard, Brush scrutinized his face closely, but failed to recognize anyone he had seen before.

He stepped closer to address him. His fists were clenched and his eyes bore a hard expression. "So you are the scoundrel who cut up my painting?"

"Oh, it's he," muttered the fellow looking up defiantly. Then with raised voice: "Yes, signor, I am that scoundrel. I admit it, and am glad that I destroyed your hateful picture. Perhaps I ought to have fixed you in a different manner, but I can see that I struck in the right place, just the same. It hurts—don't it? And—" He interrupted himself, as if afraid of saying too much.

"But what in the world was your reason for hurting me? I don't know you, and don't remember ever having seen you." He hurled the words vehemently at the man.

There was no answer, but the prisoner looked fixedly at the artist. There was a glimmer of hatred in his glance.

"What is your name—where do you come from?"

The man remained mute.

"I believe there is no use of further questioning the prisoner now," interposed the official. "We have tried to take a protocol with him, but he has, so far acted the clam."

"And is there no way of making him talk?"

"Oh, a few days of solitary confinement will probably make him open his shell. I'll let the matter rest for the present. The damage is done, and little or nothing can be gained at this time by forcing a confession of identity and motive.—Take the prisoner away." This to the guard.

"I am more than impatient though to find out the motive for this vandalism which is a conundrum to me."

"There is perhaps a question of woman involved!"

"I cannot imagine that. I have never seen the man, and am at an absolute loss to connect him and a woman with the painting."

"Well, think it over. Perhaps you will find a clew. You know it's always right to start on the trace of a crime with the maxim *'Cherchez la femme.'* And now, I would like to have you give me some personal details and other information for preparing the necessary documents in connection with the case."

After complying with the request Brush and Oldfield left the police station. As they reached the street Oldfield remarked: "Do you know, Bob, that in my opinion, too, a woman must be involved in this matter. Otherwise it is incomprehensible."

"I am trying to think of a possible connection, but can't see any solution of the enigma as yet."

They walked along silently, Brush endeavoring to recall some little love affair of the recent past which might furnish a motive for the unknown Italian's act, but could find no tangible clew. He had always been generous enough to those of his models who, aside from their professional services, had accorded him their favors, and he had never permitted any of them to believe that his affection was more than a passing fancy.

He had violated in this respect the sanctity of his studio which, like the consultation room of the physician, should have remained undefiled, but he had never entertained outside relations with any woman in Naples which might have aroused the fury of a jealous rival.

He thought of Carmelina too, but the purity of his relations with her precluded every possibility of her being in any way connected with the case.

He was still pondering when they arrived before his house in the Via Umberto.

"Well, run up to your rooms and get a few toilet things," urged Oldfield. "You'll go with me to Torre del Greco. If you hurry we'll still be in time for dinner."

"I really don't feel much like seeing people," objected Brush.

"That's just the reason I insist that you come. You must stop brooding about this unfortunate affair."

Brush still objected, but Oldfield pressed with such insistance that he at last consented and mounted to the studio where he put a pair of pajamas and a few toilet articles in a handbag. Then they drove to the Villa Ferrari.

XIV

THE GULF IS WIDENING

In the days immediately following the meeting between Miss Penrose and Paolo, a casual observer might not have noticed any change in the relations between Oldfield and Lucile. They continued to go out together and, seemingly, she took as much interest in his work as she had done before. Still there was a certain coolness in her behavior which would have been apparent to more watchful eyes.

As the days passed, however, this drifting apart became more pronounced. She frequently refused now to accompany him on his excursions, and she always found some excuse when he proposed an evening stroll to the bay. Much of her time was spent reading in the garden and, often before retiring at night, she took a stroll in the rear part of the grounds where the wooded lane paralleled the premises of the Villa Ferrari.

With the increase of the coolness between the two young people a certain dreaminess could be noticed in Lucile's countenance when she believed herself alone and, at such times too, an occasional smile

played around the corners of her mouth, as if her thoughts were dwelling on a pleasant subject.

John, not being of an effusive nature himself, did not seem to be aware of any change in her. If he had taken note of her increasingly distant manner, he ascribed it to unimportant reasons, a girlish caprice, and, with his usual reserve, gave no outward sign of his cognizance.

"Girls have a right to be capricious, I suppose," he told Brush when the latter once cautiously referred to their relations. "I know I am not a ladies' man and I am not demonstrative enough, but that is in my nature. And then, I cannot neglect my pursuits any more than I do."

Brush had accepted Mrs. Emory's urgent invitation for a prolonged stay at the villa and, while he daily visited his studio, he spent more time with Oldfield and in Torre del Greco in general than in the city. He was still morally suffering from the effect of the blow he had received by the destruction of his *Salon* picture, but his apathy gradually wore off under the influence of his surroundings, and he became an interested observer of developments.

Mrs. Emory, too, with the fine unerring instinct of woman in such matters, had perceived the condition of affairs between her nephew and ward. She saw her favorite plan threatened, but fearing to make things worse, did not dare to interfere. At opportune moments, when alone with the young

woman, she tried to draw her out by cautiously leading the conversation on the subject, but Lucile remained on guard, and the old lady began to worry considerably.

Brush vacillated constantly between the advisability of informing John of Miss Penrose's and Paolo's meeting and the desire to spare his pride an obvious humiliation. Events, however, shaped themselves so as to bring about a revelation in a peculiar manner.

The two friends returned one evening, rather late, from Naples where they had spent the day, and, making a detour, approached the villa from the rear by way of the wooded lane with the intention of scaling the fence and getting to their rooms without disturbing anyone.

They were only a short distance from the wall when the tall silhouette of a man detached itself from it. At the same time a female figure, within the grounds, hastily vanished in the darkness under the trees.

"Looks as if we had disturbed an affectionate *tête a tête* between some country swain and one of the maids," remarked Oldfield with a grin.

Brush had no time to answer this remark before the dark silhouette crossed a part of the lane illuminated by the moon, and both recognized Paolo Aratta.

An angry flush, noticeable even in the dim light, suffused John's face as he growled: "What in h— are you doing here?"

Paolo was evidently as much surprised as Oldfield and Brush, but controlled himself admirably. "I don't think that my doings here ought to concern you," he replied with a sneer.

"They do; you have evidently relations with some one in the villa."

"I am on a public road, and you have no right to question me as long as I don't trespass on your grounds."

"Which I would not advise you to do, unless you want to risk a thrashing," retorted John, his anger increased by the sneer in the Italian's voice.

"Oh, signor, you may rest assured that I will never trespass on your private *grounds.*" Paolo said this with exaggerated politeness and with special accentuation of the last word. "I may get the worst of it, as I did in the cameo deal," he added, as he turned to go.

Brush grabbed Oldfield's arm and pulled him towards the wall before he could do more than utter a curse.

"The arrogant scoundrel," he grumbled, after they had climbed over the fence and were walking toward the house.

"You forget, John, that he has some reason to consider himself the injured party."

"I don't know that he has now," was the sullen, obstinate reply. "I was willing enough to compromise the matter of the stone, though I did it more

for your sake than for his. But whom, do you suppose, he was speaking to through the grill?"

"Probably one of the maids, as you suspected before," Brush answered lightly, but with a lurking suspicion that it was not one of the servants who had disappeared under the trees at their approach.

At breakfast Lucile appeared a little pale and languid, but nothing in her demeanor served to support Brush's suspicion. To John's solicitous inquiry she replied that her sleep had been disturbed, but that, otherwise, she felt well.

Brush scrutinized her inconspicuously, but could detect no indications to strengthen his belief in an intrigue between her and Paolo. Nevertheless he thought the time for vacillation to be over, and determined to seek an opportunity to speak to her alone for the purpose of, possibly, clearing up the situation.

He realized that this was a delicate task and that the meddler's rôle was at no time a thankful one, but his friendship for John, as well as his fear of an indiscretion by the young and inexperienced girl whom he loved, overcame his scruples.

The opportunity for such an interview came in the course of the forenoon. Brush had left John working in his room, and he found Lucile reading at her favorite place in the garden. He seated himself beside her, after having received permission to do so.

"Miss Penrose, he began with a touch of embarrassment in his voice, "if you won't think me indis-

creet or indelicate, I would like to speak to you for a few minutes on a certain subject." He threw a furtive glance at her.

"I am listening." She closed the book in her lap and rested an elbow on her knee.

"It is on a subject," he continued, "which, perhaps, closely affects the future happiness of two friends, equally dear to me; I mean you and John."

She straightened herself and looked frankly at him. "Proceed," she rejoined pleasantly, but earnestly; "I am all attention. In fact, I have an idea as to what you want to speak to me about."

"I am glad of that, for it will make it easier for me to come to the point."

"It's about John, the cameo, and it's *rightful* owner. Is it not?" She strongly accentuated the adjective.

"How could you guess?"

"Easily."

"Oh, I see—Paolo—I forgot."

"Even before he told me I had an idea that you were prevaricating when you said that you had not seen me at the church."

"I did it out of discretion."

"Your close observation of me since then has not escaped me either."

"Believe me, however, that I have your interest at heart."

"Thank you."

"Well, to return to the subject. It is not so much on the relations to each other of John and Paolo Aratta that I want to touch. It is rather on the conditions which they have brought about in connection with you. Do you understand me?" he added after a pause during which she remained silent.

She started visibly and blushed. "I am not quite sure, but I think I do—that is if you refer to a certain incident of last night." She said the latter hesitatingly.

The remark assured the justness of Brush's suspicion, and he took advantage of it by replying: "That is what I mean. I was positive that it was you who withdrew from the garden wall at our appearance. I am equally sure, however, that John has not the slightest idea that it was Miss Penrose who had the rendez-vous with Paolo Aratta."

She raised her chin haughtily and looked him squarely in the face. "As far as I am concerned that would make no difference. Indeed, I regretted almost immediately that I allowed myself to be frightened by your approach. It was my intention, even today, to speak to John about all the matters you probably want to mention. I am sorry that I have allowed things to go so far, but the mistake can, perhaps, be rectified. Do you think that John would take a disappointment, such as I mean, much to heart?"

"I am sure he would. A man of his character must

feel it even more than, for example, a man like myself."

She smiled, amused.

"But it cannot be," he resumed, "that this scamp of an Italian should have influenced you to such an extent with his wail of wrong and robbery." Brush forgot for the moment his own resentment of Paolo's treatment by John.

"I confess that it has a good deal to do with my decision, though not exclusively. If I am not mistaken in your character, Mr. Brush, you, too, cannot have an exalted idea of the correctness of the cameo transaction." She looked at him questioningly, but he remained silent.

"Be that as it may," she continued, "this young Italian appears to have a higher conception of honor than you or Mr. Oldfield credit him with."

"How so?"

"Why, he frequently refused my offers to make good the financial loss he suffered through John, claiming that it was John alone who should right the matter."

"He seems to have impressed you more than favorably."

A faint blush rose to Lucile's cheeks. "I am half inclined to break off our interview," she said, "but I realize your good intentions and the fact that you don't know him better. Mr. Aratta is not what he appears to be. He comes from a noble family

whose estates have been sequestered for many years on account of a tedious law suit. He is consequently in reduced circumstances, but anyone could tell by his face and carriage that he is a gentleman."

"Did he tell you this romantic tale?"

"He did, but I had to worm it out of him."

"Then you see him frequently?"

"You are getting indiscreet." She blushed once more and dropped her eyelids in slight confusion.

For a minute they sat in silence. Then she looked up. "Will you do me a favor?" she pleaded.

"With pleasure, if it is in my power."

"Oh, it isn't much; it needs only a little delicacy, and you are John's friend. Will you undertake to prepare him, in any way you think best, for his disappointment? You know what I mean by that. I may then have an interview with him myself."

"Why don't you speak to him directly?"

"I have my reasons; and as long as you have assumed the rôle of an intermediator, you ought to carry it out—shouldn't you?"

Brush agreed to her request, and left her to resume her reading. As the situation appeared to be strained enough, he made up his mind to speak to John at the earliest possible moment.

The after-luncheon cigar gave him the nearest opportunity and, with the first puffs, he opened his batteries. "*A propos* this Italian fellow, Aratta, did you see him in the interval between your stormy

interview in the garden and last night's encounter?"

"I did not; and, what's more, I don't care to even hear about him," he replied somewhat gruffly. "You know the subject is distasteful to me."

"Well, I still think you take the matter too lightly. There was certainly some significance in his prowling around the garden wall last night."

"You saw what he was after—one of the maids."

"And you don't connect it at all with his threats of vengeance?"

"Oh, pshaw; barking dogs don't bite."

"Mad dogs do."

"What happened again to make you take this tack?"

"Nothing in special; only I did some thinking this morning."

"And the result is probably that the mountain has labored and brought forth a mouse," Oldfield remarked sarcastically.

"I am not jesting, John," Brush resumed without paying attention to the sarcasm. "I have definitely come to the conclusion that there is something in the wind which bodes ill for you. By the way, do you know that Miss Penrose is cognizant of the fact that you got the cameo from Aratta?"

"She is? Who told her, and what of it?"

"She guessed it at the time he was here to see you, and I inadvertently admitted it. You remember, however, that you failed to satisfy her curiosity as

to the details of your acquisition when you showed her the cameo, and she wouldn't be a woman if she hadn't found means to get the information she wanted."

"How did she get it?" he queried interestedly.

"Simply by meeting Paolo."

Brush observed John sharply. He turned pale, then stared at him fixedly, and the words came almost with a hiss from between his clenched teeth: "Are you sure of this?"

"I am; but they met by chance, at first, as I have reason to believe."

"*At first!* Bob, do you mean to insinuate that Miss Penrose has frequently and clandestinely met this scoundrel of an Italian? It would be an insult to her."

"I did not mean it that way, John; but curiosity and a romantic temperament, such as Miss Penrose has,—I would speak to her about it, at any rate, if I were you."

"I wouldn't think of offering her the insult."

"Perhaps she will speak of it herself. Why not give her an opportunity by bringing up again the subject of the cameo. You might offer to let her wear it."

He became thoughtful. "I was thinking of doing that as soon as I would have the courage to—" He suddenly interrupted himself and grasped Brush's hand. "I appreciate your friendship, Bob, and

thank you for your interest. I understand your motive too, but I don't want you to speak about this affair any more. It pains me, and it is a matter which can only be adjusted between Lucile and myself. As to Signor Aratta," he added, "I'll see to it that he gets caned if caught prowling around the villa."

XV

HYPNOTISM AND LOVE

"How about that unfortunate destruction of your painting in the Marchese gallery? I heard and read about it, but don't know any of the details."

The question was addressed to Brush by Jinradasa, his East-Indian friend. Both were seated in a restaurant of the Via Roma where they had accidentally met at luncheon.

"You probably know as much as I do," replied the artist. "The newspapers published the story completely."

"But, as far as I remember, there was no mention of the motive or the identity of the vandal."

"They have not been ascertained. The matter, however, is still in the hands of the police." Brush seemed inclined to drop the subject. He had almost stopped brooding over his loss, but any mention of the picture was painful to him.

"I was much interested in the case," began the Hindoo again, "and called at your studio the day I heard of it, but found it locked."

"I had gone with Oldfield to Torre del Greco."

"And you have not pursued your inquiry any further?"

"No; I thought it best to leave it to the authorities. They have the man and, sooner or later, they'll get out of him who he is."

"I wouldn't have the patience to wait, if I were the interested party. Too much slow routine about their work."

"Well, the damage is done, and nothing can repair it. I must confess, though, that occasionally I get impatient to know the whys and wherefores. In fact, I thought of going to headquarters this afternoon."

"The case has interesting psychological features. I should like to go with you, if you don't mind."

"Not at all. On the contrary, it would please me to get your opinion, after having seen the man."

They awaited the passing of the *siesta* hour, and then started for the police station where they were informed that the prisoner had been taken to the municipal jail.

On introducing himself there, Brush and Jinradasa were conducted to the judge to whom the preliminary *dossier* of the case had been turned over. There were no new developments. The prisoner still maintained the same attitude, and refused to disclose his identity or to give the motive for his deed, but the magistrate was confident that he was

weakening under the effect of the frequent cross examinations and the solitary confinement to which he was subjected.

"Would there be any objection to my questioning the man in his cell?" asked the Hindoo.

"None whatever, since you are a friend of Signor Brush," consented the judge, "but I doubt your success. Some of our cleverest men have tried to worm something out of him, but he is the most stubbornly reticent man that has ever come under my observation."

At Jinradasa's request Brush refrained from accompanying him, and remained in the office of the magistrate to await his return.

A guard conducted the Hindoo to the iron-grated door of the prisoner's cell, but Jinradasa wishing to enter, one of the jailers was called to open it, and he was left alone with the occupant.

The cell was a narrow whitewashed compartment with a floor of red flagstones, and contained nothing in the shape of furniture, except a chair, an iron cot and a wooden vessel in the corner opposite it. On the floor, between the chair and bed, stood a glazed earthenware water-pitcher. The light entered through the grating from the corridor and was sufficient to make all objects in the cell clearly distinguishable.

When Jinradasa entered, the prisoner was reclining on the edge of his cot. He barely looked up, but

noticing the strange yellow headgear and the swarthy foreign countenance of his visitor he sat up boldly and gazed at him with an undisguised expression of wonderment.

The Hindoo pulled the chair opposite the cot and seated himself closely to the occupant. He did not speak, but looked steadily and kindly into the eyes of the prisoner. The latter evidently waited to be addressed, but getting restless and impatient after several minutes under the fixed glance of his visitor asked somewhat gruffly: "Who are you—what do you want of me?"

The Oriental did not answer immediately, but continued his unflinching gaze. At last he said slowly and putting a hand on the other's knee: "I am a friend and want you to have confidence in me."

"And you are not a *jettatore*?"

"Do I look as if I had the evil eye? I am a friend, as I told you, and want you to regard me as such."

"I don't know you, and I have nothing to confide," was the faltering reply of the prisoner, but the tone of the answer showed nothing of the hostility exhibited in his first question. He seemed to be under a spell, fascinated and calmed, at the same time, by the unwavering glance of the Hindoo's eyes into which he felt compelled to gaze with equal constancy.

"You believe me to be a friend, however—don't you? I *want* you to trust me." The voice of Jinradasa was suave, insinuating, yet it bore a subtle tone of command which appeared to impress the other.

"I think I can believe you," he muttered hesitatingly.

"You are tired—very tired—are you not?"

"I feel drowsy. It must be that I am tired from their pestering me with questions which I don't want to answer."

"But you feel comfortable now. I can see it. Lean back on your pillow while I talk to you and you'll feel more at ease." The words were monotonously uttered by the Hindoo who, while speaking, had gradually raised himself above the line of the other's vision and brought his eyes to a distance of barely eight inches from his.

"My talking to you will not annoy you," he continued in the same even voice. "On the contrary, it will help you to relax and, later, to go to sleep. I can see now that your eyelids are heavy, and that your vision is blurred. Close them, and lean back on your pillow."

Jinradasa put his fingers lightly on the forehead of the prisoner who did not resist, and made a few passes over the closing eyes. He had succeeded in inducing a partial hypnosis and proceeded to make it complete by gently assisting him to a comfortable,

reclining position and by resuming his low monotonous talk. "You are almost asleep now," he said, bending over him, "and you cannot hear distinctly what I say to you. I don't want you to hear. I *want* you to sleep, sleep."

The eyelids of the man quivered, perhaps in an effort to open them and to resist the compelling force, but the Hindoo lightly placed his fingers on them and, while keeping them closed, continued to speak: "You are breathing deeply and regularly now. You *cannot* open your eyes. You are soundly asleep, and you will remain asleep now until I tell you to wake up. You will dream too, dream of your home, your folks and the house where you live. I want you to tell me all about it. You see it—don't you? You can speak too. Answer me. You see it plainly—don't you?"

"Yes, plainly." The reply was given with some effort.

"Then describe it to me."

"It is a low pink-colored house with a garden behind, and a hedge fence enclosing it on all sides. There are large trees too."

"Where is the house situated?"

"In Anacapri."

"Ah, the village up on the mountain side in the island?"

"Yes."

"And what is your name?"

The hypnotized man seemed to hesitate.

"I want to know your name, and you *must* answer me," pressed Jinradasa.

"Luigi Bernado."

"And now tell me whether you know Signor Brush, an artist."

"No."

"No? I mean the artist whose painting you cut up."

"Oh, him? Yes, I have seen him since."

"You mean since you destroyed his picture? But didn't you know him before?"

"No."

"What then made you mutilate his painting?"

"Because I hate him." Luigi's eyebrows drew together in a sinister expression.

"Why should you hate him when you don't know him?"

"He stole my girl from me."

"Your girl? Who is she?"

"Carmelina Tosetti, the daughter of our neighbor."

"But how did he steal her? I want you to tell me the truth."

"He stole her heart. I knew it even before she went to his studio to have her picture painted. She always talked about him, and I knew by the way she talked that she was in love with him."

"And before that she loved you?"

"I don't know, but our parents had arranged for us to marry some time."

"I understand; but how did you come to think of revenging yourself on him in that way?"

"She was so proud of the picture as if she had painted it herself, and when she told me where he had placed it for the public to see, I went to look at it."

"And then?"

"I got so angry that I pulled my knife and cut it to pieces."

The Hindoo had drawn from his subject all he wanted to know. "You have told me enough," he said after a short pause, "but now I want you to tell the judge the same story you have told me when you are called to his presence to-morrow. I want you to *remember* that, and you *must* tell it."

"I will."

"But I want you also to *forget* all that has happened between us two. You will sleep now undisturbed until I wake you up."

Luigi's features and body relaxed entirely, his breathing was quiet and regular and he assumed the aspect of a soundly sleeping man.

Jinradasa waited a few minutes, during which he still kept his eyes glued on Luigi, then he went to the door and called for the jailer to open the cell. Before the latter appeared, he returned to the cot and leaning over the prisoner said in a low, but com-

manding tone: "You will wake up now and feel refreshed by your sleep."

As the guard inserted the key in the lock, Luigi raised himself to a sitting posture, rubbed his eyes and looked about in a dazed manner. Before he realized that he had been asleep the Hindoo had disappeared.

Brush and the judge were in an animated conversation when Jinradasa again entered the magistrate's chamber. The latter interrupted himself in his sentence, and inquired about the result of his visit to the prisoner.

"I cannot tell you at this moment, Your Honor," he replied evasively, "but I dare say that you will get a full confession if you quiz him to-morrow. I am almost willing to guarantee it," he added at the judge's doubtful look.

When they were on the street Brush turned to Jinradasa. "What did you mean by making a quasi promise to the judge regarding a confession?"

"It means that the man has told me everything, and he will do the same at his next cross examination tomorrow."

"You must have bewitched him."

"No; I only suggested a confession."

"Hypnotic suggestion, I suppose."

"I won't deny it."

"I suspected that much when you asked to see him alone."

"And you didn't object? What of your principles about the use and abuse of hypnotism?"

"It was not my business to inquire as to your intentions. Besides, this is perhaps a case—but don't let us debate that now. I am too curious to hear the story."

"It is short. Do you know a girl by the name of Carmelina Tosetti?"

"I do. She was my model for the 'Joan of Arc'. But what of her? She cannot be involved in this matter."

"She is—vitally at that. It is she who caused the mutilation of your picture."

"Impossible!!"

"What I mean to say is that it was on her account that the crime was committed. The motive was jealousy."

"Jealousy? So the police official was right. *Cherchez la femme*. But explain yourself, man; don't you see that I am dying with curiosity." Brush took hold of Jinradasa's arm.

"Well, it appears that the prisoner, whose name is Luigi Bernado, is a neighbor of the girl and expected to marry her. She evidently allowed her admiration for you to be noticed by him, and the result was—well, you know the result."

"But why shouldn't he rather have sought to revenge himself on my person?"

"I don't know. There must be a psychological

reason, however. Funny, I didn't think of pursuing that line further," he added more to himself.

"I must see her," said Brush suddenly, after pondering a while.

"Do it, by all means. I have an idea that you will be welcome."

With the artist intensely occupied with his thoughts, the conversation lagged, and the two men soon separated at a street intersection.

Brush did not return to Torre del Greco, but spent the night at his rooms with the intention of taking the morning boat for Capri.

It was toward noon that he reached Anacapri. The horses of his carriage, tired by the steep pull up the mountain road from the Marina Grande, fell into a walk, and the vehicle was immediately surrounded by a number of children clamoring for pennies. He threw them some coppers, and was urging the driver to a faster pace when he recognized among the urchins little Pietro. With the idea of giving the boy the pleasure of driving home in a carriage, he made the driver stop and placed him on the seat beside him. The shrieking mob of youngsters ran enviously after the vehicle to see Pietro ride with the strange signor.

"And how is your big sister, Pietro?" Brush asked, patting his tousled head.

"She is sick in her bed," perfunctorily replied Pietro, whose interest was divided between the

horses and his comrades running beside the carriage.

"Sick? Not seriously, I hope. What is the matter with her?"

"I don't know. She has rags tied around her hand."

He remembered the scene at the studio when she had burned the member, and wondered whether it was that injury which caused her illness. He stopped questioning the boy, however, as it was only a short distance now to Carmelina's home where he hoped to find the case not of a grave nature.

Another carriage was waiting in front of the house, and when Brush alighted Mother Tosetti hastened to the gate to see who the visitor might be.

"Ah, signor," she exclaimed with tears in her eyes, and making an effort to kiss his hand, "I am glad it is you. We would have liked to see you these days if Carmelina hadn't objected."

"Why, what is the matter, *contadina?* I hear from Pietro that she is sick."

"She is, the poor girl—very sick. We just have the doctor here from Capri. He said yesterday that he might have to cut off her hand to save her life, if she didn't improve today. *Dio mio!*"

He grasped her sleeve. "It isn't as serious as that," he exclaimed, shocked at the news. "Is it from the burn?"

"*Si,* signor, she had burned her hand, but wouldn't tell us how, and she went about for a long while

doing her work without complaining. The doctor says the wound wasn't kept clean, and that has caused blood poisoning. *O, Santa Maria,* what misfortune!"

"Horrible, horrible! I want to see her." He ran into the house, followed by Mother Tosetti. Pietro had remained seated in the carriage from where he proudly surveyed his admiring friends.

The physician just stepped from the sick-room to ask for something when Brush entered. "Can I see her, sir?" the latter inquired anxiously.

The doctor looked at him with astonishment. "You are not a colleague, signor?" he asked in return.

"No, sir, but I am much interested in the girl."

"Ah! Well, I have nothing against it, if her mother is satisfied. The patient, I am glad to say, is much, much better to-day. Her temperature is almost normal, and the swelling, too, is considerably reduced."

"Then there is no danger of losing her hand?"

"I am quite safe in making that assertion, signor," gravely replied the physician, "and if you wait until I have a new bandage adjusted you may see for yourself."

"Thank you, sir?" Brush squeezed his hand impulsively. "You don't know what a relief this is for me."

The doctor looked at him wonderingly while Mother Tosetti, with a happy smile and repeated

"thank Gods," handed him the required things. After a few minutes he emerged again from the sick-room. "You may enter now."

Brush stepped noiselessly into the chamber, followed by the old woman. The chintz curtain was pulled aside and the light entered freely through the small window. A low exclamation of surprise came from the narrow bed when Carmelina recognized the artist. "You—you, signor?"

"It is I, Carmelina," he smiled happily, "in the flesh and blood, and I cannot begin to tell you how glad I am that you are out of danger, and how sorry I feel at this result of my crazy ambition. Can you ever forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive you," she rejoined with a significant glance at her mother who busied herself smoothing her pillows.

"Would you mind, *contadina*, leaving me alone for a while with Carmelina?" he asked.

The old woman hesitated and looked questioningly at the girl who nodded her approval. Then she left the room, and he seated himself at the bedside.

"I have nothing to forgive you," resumed Carmelina, after Brush had closed the door at her request. "It was I who insisted on it. It was I who grabbed the hot iron, and it was I, too, who refused your offer to take me to a doctor—"

"No,"—she prevented him from interrupting her

—"it is no fault of yours, and if there were really anything to forgive on my part, I should do so with all my heart." She smilingly held out her sound hand to him.

Brush took it. It was hot and slightly feverish. He retained it with an affectionate pressure.

"You know very well, my dear girl, that you are only trying to take the blame on your shoulders when it really belongs to me."

"Do not speak about it any more. I feel so much better to-day. The pain is almost gone. Tell me about the picture. Does the public like it?"

"The picture?" he repeated mechanically, as the memory of his loss flashed back to his mind. "Yes —no—that is—" She didn't know about the fate of "Joan of Arc," and he was, for the moment, at a loss what to tell her.

A slight pallor and the wavering of his voice and manner attracted her attention. She looked at him closely as if to read his thoughts.

"You are concealing something from me," she urged eagerly. "Do tell me. Don't the people like it?"

"There is nothing to tell," he replied with an effort at cheerfulness through which, however, she saw the lie.

Carmelina looked perplexed. "I can see that there is something which you don't want me to

know," she said sadly, "and yet I am so much interested in the picture."

He did not evade her appeal any longer and told her the story of the mutilation. She broke into tears when he feelingly described his emotion at the sight of the destroyed painting, and he leaned consolingly toward her, caressing her hair.

"And who, who could do such a shameful thing?" she asked, still sobbing.

At the mention of Luigi's name her sobs changed almost into a paroxysm, and she accused herself vehemently of being the cause of the deed.

"Never mind, never mind, my dear girl," he whispered to her; "the damage is not irreparable. I can still have you for a model, and I shall paint another one."

"No—no; I am sure you can never forgive me," she protested, "but neither shall I forgive him. Everyone thought he had found work in the city when he stayed away from his home for days and days."

"He couldn't return very well, being in jail."

"But he will get out of there some time. I suppose they don't kill a man for that. And then—" She interrupted herself, but the flash of her eyes plainly expressed a threat which she didn't utter.

"Don't think of the fellow any more, dear girl. He faces quite a sentence, and is punished enough by losing your love, besides." He looked at her

furtively, as he straightened himself in his chair, still retaining her hand.

"My lo—ove?" she drawled contemptuously. "He never had it."

"And I—I, Carmelina—could I ever get it?" he asked fervently.

"Oh, signor!" She looked at him reproachfully. "It is not right for you to trifle with me."

"I may have been a trifler at times, *carissima,* but I am surely not trifling now. I love you, sweetheart —dearly—and honestly."

She did not answer, but the happiness reflected in her features encouraged him to bend over and to press his lips passionately on her mouth and eyes.

With a happy smile he left the sick-room a quarter of an hour later. Slipping a couple of twenty-lira pieces into Mother Tosetti's hand "for the doctor," as he said, he promised the astonished woman to call soon again. Then he playfully pinched Pietro's ear, and allowed him to ride to the end of the village in the carriage in which he had still found him proudly ensconced.

XVI

ERUPTIONS

Dinner had just been finished, and Mrs. Emory with Miss Penrose retired for a moment, while Oldfield went to the veranda to enjoy an after-dinner cigar. Brush had been absent since the day before without having sent word as to his whereabouts, but was supposed to be at work in his studio.

There had been a decided lack of congeniality during the meal, a certain restraint which distinguished it sharply from the usual gayety of the evening repasts at the Villa Ferrari.

The coolness of the conversational atmosphere had emanated from Lucile who appeared to be absent-minded and reserved. It was she who, under some pretext, had first withdrawn from the table, being closely followed by Mrs. Emory who seemed to be concerned about her.

Oldfield was puffing silently at his cigar, enjoying at the same time the balmy evening breeze which blew from the bay. He was thinking of Lucile, whose demeanor toward him had undergone a perceptible change during the last day or two.

Her increasing coldness had, at last, been noticed by him with perturbation, and he was pondering over the possible cause of it, not admitting for a moment the supposition advanced by Brush during their last conversation on the subject.

As he believed, he had unmistakably shown that he cared for her, and if he had, so far, not declared himself, it was because a certain backwardness had always seized him when he was on the point of doing so. In his ignorance of feminine ways he also thought to have reasons for believing her favorable to his suit.

All this made the puzzle more intricate, and he was trying in vain to find reasons for her attitude and means to prevent the opening gulf from widening. A marriage proposal was unquestionably the shortest way of solving the enigma, but he doubted that conditions just then were opportune for cutting the Gordian knot in this manner.

He was still revolving this idea in his mind, vacillating between action and procrastination, when the sound of footsteps on the gravel walk below him attracted his attention. It was Brush returning from his visit to Capri.

The light from the veranda ceiling revealed his happy countenance as he threw himself into a chair.

"Where are the ladies, John?" he asked.

"In the house. They'll probably be here soon." Oldfield interlaced his fingers over his knee and

leaned forward. "Something has occurred to please you," he said. "You look as happy as if you had drawn the capital prize in the state lottery."

"May be I have drawn a bigger prize than that," Brush laughed enigmatically. "I'll tell you about it another time. The most interesting news I have now is that I not only know who the rascal is that destroyed my painting, but also why he did it."

"I always thought the Neapolitan police efficient."

"They may be, but it wasn't the police that informed me."

"Who else?"

"Jinradasa."

"Our Hindoo friend? How did he come to be interested in the affair?"

Brush related the incidents of the preceding afternoon and was about to add the story of his Capri visit when Mrs. Emory appeared on the veranda.

After greeting him pleasantly and inquiring as to his whereabouts for the last thirty-six hours, she drew Oldfield aside and spoke earnestly to him for a few minutes. Then she took the chair vacated by him, while John went into the house.

"Gracious," she began as soon as he was out of earshot, "I don't know what to make of all this. There is something in the air which I have been scenting for quite a while and which I cannot explain. I must talk to some one about it."

"I am ready to be the some one, if I'll do," smiled Brush.

"There is no other person I could talk to. Tell me, Mr. Brush, have you, too, noticed that the girl has lately become a conundrum?"

"In what way? I suppose you are referring to Miss Penrose."

"Certainly. Why, she used to confide in me as in a father confessor, but all that is changed. She isn't the same girl any more. You must have noticed the change too. Anyone but John would."

"I have indeed remarked something of the sort."

"She appears to have a load on her mind, but when I try to draw her out sympathetically she remains as silent as a clam and assures me it is nothing. What do you imagine is the matter with her?"

"Do you wish me to speak candidly, Mrs. Emory?"

"By all means."

"Well, it has been plain to me for some time that John and Miss Penrose are drifting apart. I have remarked John's love of her almost since the day of your arrival, and I thought that she reciprocated his affection, but, whether she ever did or not, I am certain now that she does not care for him any longer. Any one, but a man of his stamp, would have perceived it ere this. You certainly did, Mrs. Emory?"

"I did to my greatest disappointment, but I thought her pouting, as other girls would, because John was not demonstrative enough, and seems to be more interested in his work than in her."

"To any one who does not know him, it would appear so."

"I agree with you, but you know as well as I do that he really loves her, and I am sure she liked him. What in the world could have changed her heart, I cannot imagine. She is not fickle and, at any rate, there is no other man hereabout with whom she could have fallen in love."

"Don't I count as a possibility?" Brush laughed jestingly. "But in all seriousness, Mrs. Emory, don't you think that some handsome young Italian, whom she may have met, could have captured her heart? Stranger things than that have happened."

"As far as I know, she didn't meet any strangers, but she is not that kind of a girl anyway. She has, perhaps, an exaggerated ideal in her mind and is inclined to be somewhat romantic, but I do not believe that she would give her love to any but an American gentleman."

"She wouldn't be the first one to prefer a foreigner."

"I know that, but she is sensible and has always ridiculed the hankering of certain American women for foreigners. I wonder what she wants of John?"

"Did she ask to see him?"

"That was the message I brought him just now."

At this moment the inner drawing room door was opened, and Miss Penrose could be seen mounting the stairway to her room. A minute later Oldfield appeared again on the veranda.

"It's all over between us, aunt Clara," he said quietly, but with a tremor in his voice that gave the lie to his apparent calmness. "Don't go, Bob," he added turning to Brush who rose to leave, "you knew it before I did."

"And what reasons, if any, did she give, John?" asked Mrs. Emory solicitously.

"I do not consider that I have the right to disclose them. She alone may tell you." He turned and descended to the garden.

"I am going to see her," said Mrs. Emory reflectively, after he had disappeared in the shadow of the trees.

Brush remained alone on the veranda, but it was only a few minutes before the old lady returned with a suspicious dampness in her eyes.

"The ungrateful child," she exclaimed. "She has locked herself in her room and refuses to admit me, claiming indisposition and need of rest."

She remained only a short time before retiring, and Brush, thinking it best to leave Oldfield to his thoughts, soon followed her example.

He had not yet fallen asleep, when John entered his room. He appeared calm, but his somber eyes

and drawn features betrayed the intense struggle of his soul. The wound he had received was evidently a deep one. It had probably not only touched his heart, but also that most vulnerable Achilles heel of man, his *amour propre.*

"I am going to leave Torre del Greco to-morrow morning," he said, "and, with me away, you too can hardly remain here a guest any longer. I am sorry, Bob, but—"

"I understand, John. Where do you intend to go —back to Naples?"

"Oh, anywhere! Naples, Rome, Capri—it is the same to me."

"Yes, to Capri—I'll go with you; but don't take it so much to heart, old man."

Oldfield squeezed Bob's hand with such force as to make him wince, and left the room without answer.

* * * * *

It was past midnight when Brush was awakened by a repeated rumbling noise. He sat up in bed and listened. The sound was intermittent and resembled the muffled galloping of batteries of field artillery over a hard road. Unable to define the exact nature of it, he jumped up and raised the blind nearest to the bed.

Again the sound died away, as he leaned out of the window and listened. He looked around, but there was nothing unusual in sight, except a dark

object near the street corner at some distance from the villa. This, as far as he could make out in the obscurity of the night, had the shape of a vehicle of some sort, but it remained stationary.

He was about to seek his bed again when, once more, the rumbling became audible. This time it sounded much nearer and made the windows slightly rattle. Then he remembered Vesuvius over the summit of which a thick atmosphere of vapor had been hanging during the last few days. He hastily threw the other window open which gave a view of the mountain.

The moon was hidden behind heavy clouds, and over the crater of the volcano rose a great column of black smoke. At the top of this perpendicularly rolling stem the billows of smoke spread like a gigantic, lopsided mushroom or umbrella, the under side of which was illuminated by a dull red light.

The spectacle was beautiful, but had, as yet, nothing awe-inspiring in its aspect. At any moment, however, the published predictions of the Vesuvius observatory might be realized, and Brush watched with fascination the forerunners of a seismic disturbance.

Some minutes passed without much change in the character of the spectacle. Then the rumbling noise increased in volume, and the intervals of stillness became shorter. Suddenly a broad sheet of flame leaped from the crater, followed by the sound of

quick, muffled explosions, not unlike the distant fire of tirailleurs. It was plain that, even if the coming eruption should not prove to be a destructive one, Vesuvius was going to treat the inhabitants of its slopes and the surrounding country to a performance of fireworks worth while watching.

Brush remembered that John's windows were facing the other side, and hurried to his room to get him. He entered without knocking, and called out his name. There was no answer, and the bed was empty. Then he perceived his dark form against the side of the window. The blind was half raised, and he seemed to intently watch something on the outside. As Brush stepped to his side, he felt his arm gripped with the firmness of a vice.

"Look," whispered Oldfield.

The side of the house fronting the road was in the shadow, but it was not sufficiently dark to prevent observation. A woman, carrying a small handbag, was walking on the gravel path towards the gate. It was Miss Penrose. She tried to keep under the trees lining the pathway.

"It is she," muttered Brush almost inaudibly. "What can she be about?"

"Judging by appearances, she is leaving the house clandestinely. I didn't suspect that my presence had become so odious as to cause her to take this step, or I would have been first to leave." This bitterly.

"It can't be that. There must be other reasons.

May be she ought to be prevented from leaving the house in this fashion. Will you do something, John?"

"Nothing! But, perhaps, *you* could, if you cared to." He released his grip on Brush's arm and faced him. "Ah, I see you, too, are in negligee. What brought you to my room anyway, Bob?"

"Why, the volcano—"

"That's so. I forgot about it. I was wakened by the rumbling, but when I raised the blind my attention was diverted."

"Come over to my room. I'll dress quickly and follow Miss Penrose."

As they passed along the corridor, the thought struck Brush that, possibly, the vehicle he had observed on the street corner had some connection with Miss Penrose's nightly excursion. It was certainly unusual for a conveyance of any kind to wait there at this time of the night.

Entering his room he rushed to the window on that side to see whether it was still there. Leaning out, he dimly distinguished the shape of a man, helping a woman into the seat and himself mounting after her. He called John to the window, but before the latter could respond the vehicle had disappeared.

"Immediate pursuit is out of question now," he said. "There are no horses here. Ah, if I had an automobile."

"Perhaps it is better so," murmured Oldfield.

Their attention was now forcibly called to the increasing volume of light and noise caused by the working of Vesuvius. Simultaneously a commotion in the house showed that the servants were getting alarmed. The thought of Mrs. Emory flashed through both men's mind when an anxious voice was heard calling John repeatedly. It was hers.

Brush hastily slipped into a bathrobe and hurried with Oldfield to the corridor from where she called.

She was standing at John's open door peering into the room.

When the two men appeared, she grabbed her nephew by the sleeve and exclaimed almost hysterically: "She is gone—gone! The ungrateful, heartless girl."

At his failure to show surprise or concern, she was, at first, astonished and then scolded him for indifference, until he gave his explanation.

"And why didn't you follow her immediately?" she asked reproachfully. "Even now it wouldn't be too late."

"You know, aunt Clara, I have no longer any right to interest myself in her private affairs. Besides—" He looked significantly down at his negligee.

"It might be well to search Miss Penrose's room," he suggested.

"That's so," assented Brush. "One might find indications there which could throw some light on her departure. Will you permit me to do so, Mrs. Emory?"

"Why, certainly," consented the old lady eagerly. "In my excitement at finding her room empty and her bed untouched, I neglected to take two letters which I saw lying on her dresser."

Nothing in Miss Penrose's room denoted with certainty that its occupant had left it for a prolonged period. Only a half-closed drawer and the absence of the usual toilette articles from the top of the dresser seemed to support this presumption.

In lieu of the latter, two white envelopes glistened on the embroidered cover. Brush picked them up. They were addressed to John and Mrs. Emory. Not finding other relevant indications, he returned to the corridor.

Mrs. Emory opened her envelope nervously and read aloud:

"DEAR MRS. EMORY: Somehow or other I did not have the heart to personally inform you of the reasons which induced me to break off my relations to Mr. Oldfield; relations which, according to your wishes, were on the point of leading to an engagement. Perhaps you would not have understood or regarded them as sufficient. But I know that, lately, my feelings for John have undergone a con-

siderable change, and with all respect for his talents and qualities of mind and heart, I am sure that I could never make him happy without making myself miserable.

"My departure, no doubt, will cause you some pain and disappointment, but I had to consult, in the first place, my heart which I have given to another man whom I believe worthy of it, and whom I am going to marry.

"Mr. Oldfield, if he cares to, can inform you as to some details, and I hope that your disappointment will not prevent you from thinking, sometimes, kindly of your devoted ward

LUCILE PENROSE."

John had meanwhile deliberately perused his missive, and then handed it without a word to Brush. It read:

"MY DEAR MR. OLDFIELD: When I informed you last evening of my determination to sever our relations I did not have the moral courage to tell you that your conduct in the cameo affair with Signor Aratta was only a minor reason for my action.

"I might, while never looking at it from your point of view, perhaps, in time, have arrived at condoning this, but I have learned to love Paolo whose wife I expect to become shortly. Forgive me for the pain which I know, this confession must cause you.

Sincerely LUCILE PENROSE."

"So this is the vengeance of Paolo Aratta," remarked Brush earnestly. "Truly Machiavellian. He proved to be more cunning than I thought him to be."

John didn't utter a word, but his tightly closed lips and a somber spark in his eyes spoke plainly of a suppressed uproar in his breast.

While reading his own note, he had, evidently, also listened to the contents of the other, for he motioned to Brush to hand his letter to Mrs. Emory.

"I'll talk to you about all this in the morning, aunt Clara," he said. "There is nothing to be done anyway. I, for one, am going now to watch this interesting spectacle of Vesuvius."

"Is there any danger?" inquired the old lady anxiously.

"None whatever for the moment," Brush assured her. "The force of the eruption has to increase considerably before we need to worry."

"Well, I don't like it here any more, and shall go back to the city tomorrow."

Before daybreak the volcanic disturbance had abated to minor rumblings, the ejection of flame and smoke from the crater had considerably diminished in volume and violence and, for the time being, old fire-spitting Vesuvius seemed to have retarded his threatened eruption.

In the morning Mrs. Emory and Oldfield left Torre del Greco and again took up their abode at

the Hotel de Londres in Naples. Brush, under the pretext of wishing to be nearer to the scene of the greater seismic shocks that were predicted in the newspapers, asked for permission to stay at the house for a short time, and remained at the Villa Ferrari.

XVII

BRUSH ACTS

Oldfield had given no outward signs of interest in Miss Penrose's fate when leaving for Naples, but Mrs. Emory had asked Brush to make, if possible, an effort to prevent her marriage with the Italian, and if this could not be circumvented, to assure himself, at least, of her whereabouts.

In his assumed rôle of *deus ex machina* Brush had, even without this request, intended to pursue a private, but energetic search for the strangely mated eloping couple, in the hope of proving to Miss Penrose the real character of Paolo Aratta before it was too late.

By dispelling the romantic nimbus which the Italian had woven around himself and by which he had captivated the girl, the artist was sure of tearing the veil from Lucile's eyes, and to show up her Lochinvar in his true colors. For obvious reasons he did not think of invoking the aid of the police and, knowing the law of church bans, he eliminated from his calculations the possibility of an immediate consummation of the planned marriage.

Nevertheless he decided to move in the matter at once. "Osteria Giovanni Palestra, Strada di Pellegrini, Torre Annunziata" was the address which Aratta had erstwhile given him as that of his godfather, with whom he pretended to live, and it was there that he directed his cab, an hour after Mrs. Emory and Oldfield had departed from Torre del Greco. He did not expect, however, to find Paolo at that place, and was not disappointed when, on alighting from his vehicle, he was told that he had not been seen at the inn since yesterday.

The man who gave him this information was old Palestra himself, whose yellow-parchment features vainly tried to disguise a mixed expression of cunning and rascality. Neither could he tell where Paolo, possibly, might be found. He, himself, being restless, had looked for him in his usual haunts without finding a trace of him.

"I am afraid something has happened to the boy, signor," he said finally. "He has never stayed away over night before. But may I ask the *eccellenza* what his business with Paolo might be? I am his godfather." The old scoundrel almost cringed before his interlocutor, but the hypocrisy of his remarks was so apparent that Brush became convinced of his being well informed of everything.

"Nothing of importance," he replied nonchalantly as he again mounted his conveyance. He allowed the coachman to drive off slowly, while con-

templating the advisability of having Palestra shadowed in order to get on the track of the couple. The vehicle had only turned the corner, out of sight of the inn, when a voice from behind stopped the driver.

Brush looked around and saw a man catching up with the cab whom he had observed sitting on a bench in front of the *osteria,* while talking with Palestra.

"Well, what is it?" he inquired somewhat gruffly.

"*Scusi,* signor, for stopping you," apologized the man humbly, "but I thought you might like to hear something I could tell you."

"Of interest to me?"

"Yes, but I can speak to you only privately," he said in an undertone and with a side glance at the coachman. "You'd better wait for me on the road out of town, where it will be safer for me to talk."

Brush contemplated only a moment and, expecting the promised information to have some bearing on his object, agreed to the proposition. Fifteen minutes later he was joined by the man on the highway to Naples near a clump of bushes into which they disappeared. He had ordered his driver to proceed slowly and to wait for him at a wayside inn some distance ahead.

"Well, what have you to tell me?" he began the conversation.

"I'll be short, *eccellenza,*" replied the man. "I overheard part of your talk with Giovanni. You are an Americano and, I suppose, are interested in Paolo Aratta and the young foreign lady who is with him. I know all about them and, if it is worth something to you, I can tell you where they are."

"If you do, and will help me reach them before a certain thing happens, you will find me generous enough."

"I know what you mean, signor. Paolo has secretly been boasting that he was to marry a *richissima Americana.* She is perhaps your sweetheart?"

"Never mind about that. Where can they be found?"

"*Eccellenza* need not be worried. You will catch them in time. It is not such an easy matter to get married in Italy without the required papers and without publishing the bans."

"You are sure there is no way by which they could have gotten married immediately?"

"As sure as I am having the honor of speaking to you, signor. But Paolo is sharp, and has no intention of letting the rich prize escape him on account of these obstacles. He is contemplating something which will make him sure of the fair-haired signorina and give him time to comply with the law."

"I am not clear as to your meaning."

"*Per Dio,* signor! He is arranging for a mock marriage."

"A mock marriage! The scoundrel! And you know where and when it is to take place?"

"*Si,* signor."

"Then why the devil don't you speak? What are you losing all this time for?"

"*Eccellenza* has forgotten to tell me what I am going to get for my trouble."

"Is that it, you scamp? Well, if you speak the truth, and we can prevent the crime, you shall have five hundred liras. Are you satisfied?"

"Make it thousand, signor. It is worth it."

"All right! And here are a hundred in advance. Now out with what you know."

"*Grazia, eccellenza.*"

Giuseppe then told Brush of how Paolo, for the last week or so, had secretly told several of his friends that a beautiful and wealthy American girl had fallen in love with him, that this girl was the sweetheart of an American who had cheated him out of a fortune, and that he, in return, would steal the young lady from him.

"You have hinted at all this before," impatiently interrupted Brush.

"*E bene,* signor; last night he arrived with the signorina at the inn of his godfather. I hang around there a good deal and sleep in the barn, but—"

"I don't care a hang where you sleep," again broke in Brush. "Make it short."

"I was about to say that the noise of the mountain woke me up last night, and I was going to see if old Giovanni too was awake, when I heard his and Paolo's voice through the open window. They did not speak loudly, but when I got nearer I heard them distinctly discuss the plan."

"And where was the young lady?"

"I could see her sitting in a *vettura* in front of the inn and, like several people looking out of the windows on the street, she seemed to be most interested in the doings of the mountain. My, but she is handsome."

"Well, finish the story now," urged Brush.

"It was old Palestra who first suggested the plan of the mock marriage, according to which Paolo was to take the young lady to Corpo di Cava—"

"Where is Corpo di Cava?"

"It is a small village near the railway line from Naples to Salerno. There he is to ask the help of a notorious member of the Camorra to which society he also belongs. This fellow is to dress up as a Benedictine monk from the monastery of La Trinita della Cava, and perform the ceremony in the village inn."

"And when is all this to take place?"

"At ten o'clock this evening. Palestra and one of his cronies are to act as witnesses, and they will all meet at that time."

Brush looked at his watch. It was 3.20 p. m. A train for Naples was due in about an hour, but he calculated that by driving rapidly he could arrive at the Hotel de Londres in his cab quicker than by rail.

If he desired to circumvent the dastardly plan, Oldfield had to be informed of the situation and, under the circumstances, he was sure of his co-operation in spite of the treatment he had received at the hands of Miss Penrose.

Giuseppe refused at first to accompany him to the city, but Brush wanted John to hear the story from his mouth, and insisted.

When they arrived at the hotel, Oldfield was absent, but Mrs. Emory informed him that, before leaving, he had casually expressed his intention of taking a rowboat in the bay, and to watch from there the sunset. Surprised at his unexpected appearance, she asked for news. Brush evaded the question by telling her that he had to see John on other business, and drove hurriedly to the Santa Lucia landing.

Some of the boatmen there told him that a young American had hired a small boat about half an hour ago and had rowed off in the direction of the Posilipo. Without the usual haggling, he quickly engaged a four-oared craft, and set out in the same direction.

It was no easy matter to find John's little boat among the many, large and small, that flitted over

the smooth waters of the bay. By dint of a promise of a good tip, the boatmen, however, kept a sharp lookout and, after half an hour's cruising, they sighted Oldfield.

He had shipped his oars, and was sitting in the middle of the boat. One of his elbows rested on his knee, the palm of his hand supporting the chin. His face was turned to the West where the sun was nearing the horizon.

He did not notice the approach of the larger boat, and was so startled when Brush called his name that his little craft came near capsizing.

"Well, Bob, this is a surprise," he exclaimed. "I thought you too much interested in Vesuvius to return from Torre del Greco to-day. Why, the crater is as busy as ever. Look!" He pointed to the volcano which still emitted dark clouds of smoke, occasionally mingled with tongues of flame.

"Vesuvius be hanged! There are now more important things to engage our attention than the old fire-spitter. Perhaps your eruption will equal his when I tell you the news."

Oldfield looked perplexed. "What's the matter, old man?"

"First get into this boat, and then I'll tell you."

He tied his craft to the stern of the larger boat and climbed over. As he did so, Brush noticed that one of his hands was closed around some object.

"What have you in your hand, John?" he asked, wondering why he did not use both hands in changing boats.

He opened his palm and disclosed the Cameo of Messalina. In the light of the evening sun it sparkled like a small reddish fire ball which appeared to burn his flesh.

"I was meditating about throwing it into the sea, where no one would ever fish it up again to bring him bad luck and misfortune." He uttered the words in a melancholy sort of way. "But what is the important news you hinted at, Bob?" he asked putting the jewel in his pocket.

Brush let Giuseppe repeat in an undertone all he had told him, engaging meanwhile the oarsmen in conversation. During the narrative he closely observed John, however, and noticed his indignation increase as the story proceeded.

When Giuseppe had finished Oldfield turned to Brush. "What do you intend to do, Bob?" he asked briefly.

"It is I who ought to ask you the question, and it is for you to take the initiative, John. However, if you don't act, I shall. There is no time to be lost."

"You don't think me capable of wavering in such a case, old man, even if Miss Penrose has thrown me over?"

In the interval between reaching the landing, they discussed a plan of action, and agreed to leave Mrs.

Emory, for the time being, in ignorance of the situation. There was nothing to be gained by alarming her unnecessarily. The question of getting the police into the case was dismissed on account of the story probably leaking out through that channel and, after mature consideration, the two men thought themselves capable, by their own efforts, of bringing the matter to a successful issue.

When they crossed the Piazza Municipio it was nearly seven o'clock. This gave them three hours to reach Corpo di Cava, situated about forty-five kilometers from Naples. There was no train which could get them to the village that evening, but the automobile solved the question. They took the precaution of heavily arming themselves at the hotel before going to the garage.

There was some trouble in making Giuseppe mount, as he declined to get into the devil wagon without horses, and only the energetic command of Brush, with a threat of refusing to pay the balance of his reward, induced him to take the seat next to the driver.

As the chauffeur pulled out of the garage, the occupants of the car were hailed by a yellow-turbaned pedestrian. It was Jinradasa.

"A fine evening for motoring," he called out. "I wouldn't mind being of the party."

"A capital idea to take him along," whispered

Brush to Oldfield. "He is a resourceful man, and it'll make us one more in a pinch."

He offered him his own place, but the Hindoo politely refused, and insisted on seating himself on the folding banquette opposite them. Then the car moved off at moderate speed in the direction of Portici.

XVIII

AT THE INN OF CORPO DI CAVA

"May I ask where you are going?" queried Jinradasa, after seating himself.

"Not for a joy ride, at any rate," replied Oldfield grimly.

The Hindoo looked sharply from one to the other. "Perhaps I'd better retire," he remarked. "You both look serious enough to have business on your mind. I was jesting, anyway, when I expressed a wish to be of the party."

"No, no; we want you alright," Brush assured him emphatically, "but I question your willingness to accompany us, after I explain the object of our excursion."

"You make me curious."

"I think you misjudge our friend, Bob," said Oldfield. "If I am not mistaken, he is fond of adventure. He has chased the tiger in his native jungles, and I rather imagine that he would enjoy a man hunt."

"Is that what you are bent on this evening? Let me hear about it."

Brush related the object of the excursion without going into the more intimate details, but Jinradasa's shrewdness patched the story as completely as if it had been told him in its entirety.

"You don't expect to kill anyone?" he asked.

"Not if we can help it," replied Brush. "I, at least, have no desire to come in conflict with the law."

"Law be d—," growled Oldfield, "if I can lay my hands on the scoundrel."

"Are you armed?" asked Brush, after Jinradasa had cheerfully assented to lend his aid, passive or active, to them.

"I always carry these little friends with me," chuckled the East Indian, his white teeth glistening from the jet-black frame of his mustache and beard, "but I rarely need them." He produced an automatic revolver and short curved dagger of Oriental pattern. "One can often accomplish things better without resorting to crude means," he added significantly, replacing the weapons in his coat.

They had reached the suburbs now and, there being sufficient time in which to reach their destination, the chauffeur was allowed to drive at the same moderate speed until they had left Torre Annunziata behind, which they were careful to cross by outlying streets.

Then, just as the machine was gathering speed, something happened which closely imperiled the suc-

cess of the undertaking. They had, at the time, nearly reached Nocera de' Pagani, only fifteen kilometers from Corpo di Cava. Suddenly the big headlights of the motor car revealed, about twenty-five yards ahead, a horse-driven vehicle issuing from a cross lane. It was conducted by Giovanni Palestra, accompanied by another man.

At the sight of the snorting automobile the frightened animal reared and plunged into the middle of the road, which was not broad enough to allow the car to pass, and its driver was vainly tugging at the reins in an effort to get out of danger.

With admirable presence of mind and lightning movements the chauffeur shut off the power and put on the foot and emergency brakes, but the sudden retard, while preventing a collision with the frail vehicle, stripped a tire from one of the rear wheels.

This, with the consequent swerving of the machine, nearly threw it into the ditch alongside the road. As the occupants scrambled out of the car, amid Giuseppe's frantic invocations of half a dozen saints, Palestra's horse took the bit between its teeth, and dashed off in the darkness.

"I hope he'll break his neck," muttered Giuseppe fervently.

The chauffeur detached one of the lamps and deliberately examined the damage. "I have no extra tube along, he said phlegmatically, "and it will take about an hour to repair and mount the tire again."

Oldfield looked at his watch. It showed 8:45 p. m. "That won't do," he stormed. "We've got to be in Corpo di Cava before ten. You have to work *presto—presto,* do you understand? I am going to help you."

"*Si,* signor, I'll do my best to get you there in time."

John threw off his coat and started to work feverishly with the driver, while Giuseppe approached Brush and expressed his fear of having been recognized by Palestra.

"Nothing of the kind," the artist reassured him. "He was too scared and busy with his horse to notice anything and, besides, the glare of the headlights would have prevented him from recognizing anyone."

"I hope so, signor," he faltered, "for, otherwise, my life wouldn't be worth a candle."

Now Brush, too, took a hand in the work, and all three sweated for three quarters of an hour with cement, rubber patches, tire tools, jack and air pump before the car was again ready to proceed. It was just 9:30 p. m. when the chauffeur started the motor again.

"Let her go now for all she is worth," commanded Oldfield impatiently.

The man at the steering wheel opened the throttle wide, manipulated the accelerator and spark, and shoved the speed clutch into the highest notch. As-

suming a crouching position, he clenched his teeth, and kept his eyes riveted on the illuminated stretch of road before him.

Having gained a momentum, the car flew ahead as if shot out of a catapult. The hood of the motor trembled under the fierce respiration of the engine. The clacking of the valves and the whir of the fly-wheel mingled in an indistinct succession of metallic, vibrating sounds, and the puffing of the burned gases, escaping through the cutout of the silencer, resembled the subdued roaring of distant thunder.

The objects along the road, barely distinguishable at a slower gait, became unrecognizable opaque masses in the tremenduous burst of speed. Like flitting phantoms they vanished behind the racing vehicle. The dark horizon line flattened and whirled around like the suspended figures of a merry-go-round at the height of its circular motion. Fortunately the road was clear, and only once a yelping dog leaped across the way, in front of the automobile, to disappear over the ditch.

"That's going some," chuckled Oldfield with a grin of satisfaction. "If he keeps it up, we'll be there in time."

"If not somewhere else," dryly remarked Jinradasa.

Giuseppe was breathlessly hanging on to the upholstered edge of his seat, and kept on invoking the aid of his full list of saints.

The machine, however, arrived near the outskirts of Corpo di Cava without further mishap, where the chauffeur slowed down at John's instance.

"We'll stop there. It won't do to drive into the village with the automobile." He pointed to a clump of trees beside the road which could be comfortably reached with the car.

"*Si vero,* signor," remarked Giuseppe who again caught his breath after the machine had stopped. "It would cause a commotion."

"And probably defeat our object," added Brush. "You are right, John."

"I would propose that you also put out the lights," suggested Jinradasa.

They had only fifteen minutes before them and, after reversing the car and covering the lamps, instead of extinguishing them, Oldfield, Brush and Jinradasa started for the village. Giuseppe having decidedly refused to go along, was left with the chauffeur who received orders to keep the engine slowly running. The old Italian had given Brush explicit instructions, however, as to the location of the little *albergo,* and a five minutes' walk brought the three men in front of the inn.

The village street was absolutely deserted and, aside from a few dim lights in the side windows of the building, was wrapped in utter darkness.

Oldfield tried the knob of the front door. It was open, and they entered a sort of vestibule, the obscur-

ity of which was only slightly dispelled by an oil lamp hanging on the wall. In the rear of this a stairway led to the upper floor. At the creaking of the hinges a girl stuck her head out of a door with an inquiry.

"We are looking for the wedding party," answered Brush with quick wit and a reassuring smile.

"Oh, they are up stairs, signor, the second door to the right. The holy man, though, hasn't arrived yet. They expect him every minute.

"That's good. Well, here is something for you, and don't say a word about our arrival. This is a surprise, you know." He slipped a two-lira piece in her hand, and she withdrew with a startled look at the yellow-turbaned Hindoo.

Oldfield squeezed Brush's hand and uttered a sigh of relief. "We are in time," he whispered as they noiselessly mounted the brick stairway.

The upper corridor was also sparsely illuminated. From behind the door, indicated by the girl, came the muffled sound of voices. Listening for a minute, Brush recognized those of Paolo and Palestra. A third one, evidently belonged to the latter's companion who was to be one of the witnesses. The voice of Miss Penrose could not be heard.

In view of the imminent arrival of the false monk, they looked about for a place to hide until the psychological moment. They had decided not to interfere until then, so that Miss Penrose could be thor-

oughly convinced of the crime planned against her.

A dark room, opposite the one where the wedding party was assembled, and the door of which they found unlocked, offered the desired refuge. They entered quietly and left the door slightly open.

A few minutes later, the heavy steps of a man on the stairway became audible. It was the pseudo priest. Without knocking at the opposite door, he pushed it open and stood for a moment in the illuminated frame. Then he greeted the party with a blessing motion of his hands. The door remained ajar.

They could now see Miss Penrose seated in a chair over the back of which Paolo was familiarly leaning. He and his friends were dressed in holiday attire. Oldfield started at the sight and would have rushed forward had not Brush put a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"Not yet," he whispered. "Only a minute's patience and we'll get them."

Miss Penrose had risen and stood at the side of Paolo. The two formed a charming contrast of physical beauty. It was the North and the South, the living symbols of pale, rosy morning and beautiful, dusky eve that stood there ready to melt into each other.

The monk stepped before them into the middle of the room. Old Giovanni and his friend ranged themselves behind the groom and bride. The false

priest started to say something and—the psychological moment had arrived.

With a rush the three men crossed the narrow corridor and stood in the room. Three glistening revolver barrels were leveled at the Italians who stood speechless with dismay and fright. Miss Penrose, with an exclamation of intense surprise, involuntarily stepped back and sank into the chair from which, a moment ago, she had risen. Paolo did not utter a word, but his eyes bored themselves with fiendish hatred into those of Oldfield who stood in front of him.

"Don't move," admonished the latter cooly, "and not a word, or I shoot you down like the miserable dog you are. I would not soil my hands on you as I did once before."

Paolo sullenly obeyed the command, as did the other three men who were covered by Brush and Jinradasa.

Miss Penrose had meanwhile recovered from her surprise. She rose, pale, but determinedly, from her chair. Her voice did not falter as she proudly turned to John.

"What does this mean, Mr. Oldfield? And by what right do you presume to intrude at this moment? I am here by my own free will, and no bullying tactics on your part can prevent me from marrying the man of my choice."

John winced. "Perhaps a word, Miss Penrose,

can accomplish what my bullying tactics—as you are pleased to call it—can't do."

"I am curious indeed to hear it." Her tone was bordering on disdain.

"Well, what would you say, if I were to tell you that this holy man here is an imposter, that the man you are about to marry is a low-born bastard and scoundrel, and that these criminals have conspired to entrap you in a mock marriage?"

Miss Penrose recoiled and turned almost livid. Then she looked slowly from one to the other of the two accused men, who had not understood a word of what had been said in English. At last she said impressively: "I would not believe it."

"Not even if you heard it from their own mouths?" And addressing himself to the pseudo monk, he extracted from him, under threat of exposure to the police, a full confession of his part in the conspiracy. Then, turning to Paolo, he asked curtly: "Can you contradict him?"

The latter did not answer. "Can you contradict him?" repeated John sternly, bringing the muzzle of his revolver closer to his face.

"No," came the sullen, hesitating reply, as the girl's eyes hung anxiously on his lips.

"Thank you, Mr. Oldfield," murmured Miss Penrose, her features suffused with a deep blush of mortification. "I apologize. You have saved more than my life."

"Then you will return with me to Aunt Clara?"

"What else can I do?" She seemed utterly annihilated, and fell back in her chair, covering her face with her hands.

Oldfield now turned to the Italians. "I could hand you all over to the law," he said frowningly, "and in fact, I would do so were it not that I hate to see the name of this lady mixed up with that of scoundrels and criminals, such as you are. As it is, I'll let you go, but—"

"You don't mean to let this young villain escape from a just punishment?" Jinradasa interrupted.

"I don't see any way of retribution by law that would not involve Miss Penrose's name in a scandal, and I certainly cannot shoot him down in cold blood."

"Leave him to me. A black-hearted rascal, such as he, must not go unpunished."

"What can you do with him?" asked Brush.

"I can make him remember this night with horror all his life," replied Jinradasa mysteriously "and that without physically harming a hair on his head."

"And without involving us with the police?" asked Oldfield.

"Absolutely."

"Jinradasa, it will give me unmitigated pleasure to turn the rascal over to you."

Miss Penrose had heard nothing of this dialogue. She still sat motionless, with her face buried in her palms. Oldfield glanced furtively with an expression

of deep sympathy at the girl whose pride had received such a crushing blow. Then he asked Brush to conduct her to the automobile.

She took his proffered arm quietly, without a glance at Paolo and, in her mortification, thankful to John that he had not offered to escort her himself.

"Where is the vehicle in which you came?" asked Jinradasa of Palestra.

"Down in the courtyard, signor," cringed the old man. "You will not take it away from me—will you, *eccellenza?* I am a poor man."

"It will be returned to you to-morrow. I want to borrow it only for to-night to take this young fellow for a ride." He raised his chin in the direction of Paolo.

"And now all four of you will range yourselves against the wall and hold up your hands until I can find a place to safely lock you up for the night; that is with the exception of Signor Aratta who will be disposed of in a different manner."

The four men obeyed the command. With the exception of Paolo, they seemed to feel relieved at the turn of things which promised them escape from the penitentiary. Jinradasa went downstairs while Oldfield kept the men covered.

The Hindoo returned after a few minutes with the proprietor of the inn whom he had found asleep on the lower floor. "There is a cellar with a heavy

iron door in the basement," he said, "where three of the gentlemen can find accomodation for the night. And here is a rope for the bridegroom—he wanted to be tied." This with a smile to Oldfield whose lips grimly parted at the joke.

"As to the proprietor here," he continued, "I don't believe that he knew what was going on in his place, but he has, at any rate, been made to understand that any attempt to release these men before morning would be disastrous to him. Besides, we are going to take the key along."

The Italians were marched downstairs and, with the exception of Paolo, locked in the cellar, while the latter was securely bound and placed into Palestra's two-seated cart. Oldfield walked back to the automobile, after explaining to Jinradasa the location of the Villa Ferrari where they were to meet.

Under the clump of trees he found Brush and Miss Penrose seated in the machine, and the car ready to depart. He took the seat on the folding banquette and gave the order to start. Near Torre Annunziata Giuseppe dismounted after having received the balance of his reward, and, shortly after midnight, the automobile arrived at the Villa Ferrari. During the whole trip not a word had been exchanged between the three occupants of the tonneau.

About two o'clock in the morning Jinradasa, too,

drove in through the gate which had been left open for him.

Miss Penrose had retired to her room on alighting from the automobile, while Oldfield and Brush waited on the veranda for the arrival of the Hindoo.

"Will you permit me the use of your motor car for an hour or so?" asked Jinradasa when he joined the two men.

"At this time of the night?" queried Oldfield in return.

"It is absolutely necessary that I get to Naples in order to dispose as soon as possible of my little affair with our would-be bridegroom." He indicated Paolo whom he had left seated in the cart.

"Well, I suppose a little tip will make the chauffeur willing to interrupt his sleep," assented Oldfield. "He is dozing there in his machine, if I am not mistaken."

"Thank you. And now you may rest assured that Signor Aratta will be dealt with in a manner which may prove a salutary lesson to him."

"I have your word, Jinradasa, that nothing will be done, that, in its consequences, might involve Miss Penrose's name in a scandal?"

"Nothing whatever. But I must warn you that, at any rate, it would be advisable for all of you to quit Naples and put some distance—the larger the better—between yourselves and Italy. The Cam-

orra, to which Aratta belongs, is not to be trifled with, and its arm is long."

"I thought of that too," said Brush; "that is as far as John is concerned. For myself, I have hardly anything to fear and, in any case, I'd take my chances in Rome. But how about you?"

"I fear nothing," replied the Hindoo impressively. He walked over to the automobile and, after a few words with the chauffeur, returned to the cart where he bid Paolo to dismount. The ropes which had held the latter had been cut, and he moved freely, but, apparently, in a dazed and hesitating way.

"I wonder what he did that for?" remarked Oldfield to Brush. "I wouldn't trust that fellow with his hidden stiletto."

"Leave it to Jinradasa. Look, he seems to have perfect control over him." Brush pointed to the car in which the Hindoo and Poalo were seating themselves. "And now let's go to bed," he continued as the machine drove off. "I feel the need of rest after this exciting day."

XIX

JINRADASA'S PYRE

Without being able to explain how he got there Paolo found himself in the court of a strange building. Its architecture was new to him, the sky seemed of a different hue and the heat more oppressive than in Italy. In a tree which shaded a marble fountain green paroquets chattered, and in the open corridors which surrounded the court scores of monkeys, large and small, were either peacefully sleeping or picking insects from each other's bodies. There was no human being in sight.

He mounted a short flight of stairs and walked about among the apathetic monkeys, when his attention was attracted by a large ape squatting on a banister. The animal had his back turned to him and seemed to examine something in his paw with simian curiosity, and when he looked closer he recognized with intense surprise the object as the cameo which he had found near Bosco Reale. Instinctively he grabbed for it, but the monkey closed his fingers around the stone and jumped up with a snarl. His eyes glittered with rage and, strangely

enough, Paolo saw in his threatening features an expression that recalled to his mind that of Oldfield during their encounter in the Villa Ferrari.

Once more he reached for the ape with the intention of taking the cameo from him by force. At his move the animal dropped the stone and, with a succession of squeals and wild shrieks, made a savage attack on him. It landed square on his shoulders and clawed and bit his arms with which he tried to protect himself. The situation was anything but ridiculous. The ape, being large and furious, Paolo was compelled to use all his strength to free himself from his simian assailant. The agility of the latter, however, was greater than his own and he soon became aware of blood trickling down from deep scratches on his neck and hands.

At last, he managed, with a quick grip, to get hold of the monkey's throat and slowly choked him into submission. When his arms dropped powerlessly to his sides, he flung him to the ground. The limp body rolled down a flight of stone stairs, the head striking the sharp edges, and he remained motionless at the foot of it.

The monkey colony had become wildly excited during the combat, and scores of them were jumping around in paroxysms of fright and fury. From the floor, the banisters and column bases they flashed their teeth at the man, and their chattering, hissing

and shrieking created a babel of noises, such as Paolo had never heard before.

He picked up the cameo and tried to withdraw ignominiously from the scene, when he saw himself suddenly surrounded by a number of swarthy-faced turbaned men. They had emerged from the interior of the buildings, attracted, no doubt, by the disturbance. Their gibbering and wild gesticulating, as they noticed the lifeless form of the monkey, added to the general uproar. He tried to explain matters and attempted to press through them, but they did not understand him and his efforts were in vain. Struggling wildly, he was dragged along the corridor into a gloomy hall.

There, a couple of the men disappeared through a sculptured door into an adjoining room. The rest remained, closely surrounding and holding him by various parts of his attire and anatomy. They had calmed down perceptibly on entering the hall, but were still excitedly talking in subdued tones.

A few minutes passed. Then a yellow-robed bareheaded man appeared through a richly gilded and painted door, the sides of which were ornamented with sculptured monkeys and gigantic elephant tusks. At his appearance, the men holding Paolo released him and the yellow-garbed official—such he seemed to the Italian—motioned him to follow.

He led the way through the same door by which he had entered. They passed a narrow hall the walls

of which were covered with crudely painted frescoes. The waning light just allowed the Italian to notice that they represented a series of horrid conceptions of infernal punishments. At the end of this hall, an antique carved door silently opened and closed behind them.

He found himself in a high square room with a low dais in the center. This was occupied by a chased silver table on which stood a small shrine of still more exquisite workmanship. Behind the table two men were seated in whom he seemed to recognize Oldfield and Brush in spite of the strange apparel and the beards they wore. A third empty stool was taken by Paolo's guide who covered himself with a yellow turban, and whom he recognized now as the dark-faced stranger who had assisted the two Americans at the surprise in the inn of Corpo di Cava.

At one side of the table a gray-haired shriveled man of still odder aspect squatted on the dais. He was clad in nothing but a pink loin cloth. In his lap lay a three-pronged staff, and his forehead was smeared with a mysterious sign. This symbol was repeated on his breast and arms. His neck was encircled by a long chain of corrugated seeds. Hair and beard were long and matted, and his deeply sunken eyes glowed with a fanatic fire.

A strange fear grasped the heart of the Italian, but, the silence not being broken, he observed his surroundings. The delicate chasing of the silver

table showed hundreds of monkeys, in all attitudes of gambol and play, against a bewildering network of branches and vines. At the foot of the table lay heaps of white flowers, masses of which were also strewn over a second table near by.

The walls and ceilings were paneled in dark wood, the monkey motif being followed out in the carvings throughout the room. Light was furnished by a number of thick wax candles. The air was heavily laden with their perfume. Mingled with the odor of sandal wood and flowers this over-powering fragrance settled, like a thin mist, on Paolo's brain. He began to feel uneasy under the snaky glitter of the old Yogi's gaze at the foot of the silver table. It seemed to bore through his eyes whenever he looked at him, or penetrate his skull when his head was turned away.

"You have maliciously killed one of the sacred animals of this temple," Jinradasa, at last, said to him, breaking the oppressive silence.

"I have done nothing of the sort," he protested vehemently. "The beast attacked me, and I had to defend myself."

"It is not exactly so," remarked the Yogi in a passionless voice. "He does not tell the full truth."

"The temple apes are not vicious," fell in again Jinradasa. "It is more likely that the dead animal—if it attacked you at all—did so through your provo-

cation. But let us hear the story from the victim itself. This holy man will summon the witness."

Paolo failed to grasp the bewildering proposition. As it was, his senses had gradually become muddled. His eyes were steadily attracted to the Yogi who kept his gaze riveted on him and who raised himself now from his squatting position.

He was a tall, emaciated ascetic. As he stood there, extending his staff and one long, hairy arm at the Italian, the latter was struck with the weird and awe-inspiring figure before him. His glance became irresistibly fixed on the gleaming brass prongs of his staff, and he felt a benumbing weakness creep over him, which he vainly tried to shake off.

The Yogi stepped from the dais and, making some mysterious passes with his bony fingers, slowly advanced to within a few feet of Paolo who felt his limbs become rigid and his muscles and sinews stiffen. The mist on his brain appeared to become heavier, while a thin film settled before his eyes through which everything about him assumed a nebulous shape.

Then the Yogi squatted down again in his former place. As he did so, the door opened and the monkey which had been slain leaped in. Paolo recognized him by the clotted blood stains on his head, but, in spite of his horror at this apparition, he remained motionless.

With a few bounds the ape approached the dais,

while the Yogi murmured some unintelligible words in his beard. These the animal seemed to answer with a lively chatter. Then the long, hairy arm was once more stretched out towards him. The monkey turned around. His eyes gleamed viciously and, crouching a moment for a spring, he flew with one long leap at his throat.

Paolo tried to throw up his arms for protection, but his limbs refused obedience to his will. His body appeared to be completely paralyzed; only the brain, though under a cloud, was active. With unspeakable horror he felt the impact of the beast against his chest and, for a second, its hot breath in his face. Then the sharp teeth sank deeply into his neck and he fell heavily to the floor.

The monkey lay on top of him and did not relax his hold for a moment. He did not claw or tear with his paws, but his jaws held his throat with an iron grip and, vampire-like, he sucked the blood slowly and greedily from his veins. He had no sensation of bodily pain, the mental horror being superior to physical torture, but, with the essence of life being steadily drawn from him, he was growing fainter, and weaker in mind.

At last the ape relaxed his grip. It seemed an age since he had sunk his teeth in Paolo's throat. He felt as if his body had been drained of all blood; there was certainly none flowing from the wounds in his neck.

AT LAST THE APE RELAXED HIS GRIP. — *Page 272.*

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For a short moment the monkey rested his fore-paws on his chest. Then, with a last look, as if to assure himself that life had flown, he moved away and disappeared from view.

The Italian was neither dead nor unconscious, but, try as he might, was powerless to move a limb or even an eyelid. With the beast's weight removed from his chest, the film before his eyes seemed to have lifted. His mental faculties became keener again, but the rigidity of his body remained the same, and he lay there as in a cataleptic state.

His eyes were closed, yet his vision was clear, though everything appeared in a faint pinkish aureole. His hearing, too, was, if anything, more acute than ever, and he heard Jinradasa, the Yogi, Oldfield and Brush whisper in a vernacular which he did not understand. Then they rose and approached his prostrate body.

The Yogi bent over him, put his hand on his heart, and his sinister eyes burned through the closed lids into his brain. "He is dead," he said impressively, "and must be cremated at once."

The words fell on Paolo like the blow of a sledge-hammer. His brain reeled wildly. An intense, intolerable anguish took hold of him. Every muscle and sinew of his body strained to make a move. He strove violently to raise himself, to cry out, and to shake off the ghostly hand that held his throat in a merciless clutch.

But fear, awful, crushing fear had, apparently, stopped the beat of his heart, and all his efforts to burst the invisible bands that held him down went for naught. No breath escaped his lungs, no muscle twitched, and his tongue, leaden and dry, lay paralyzed against his palate.

The useless struggle ceased when the violence of his straining had exhausted his imaginary strength. He strove to think, but the hammering in his temples, and the blood which now rushed again in hot waves through his brain cells made this effort, too, futile. He relaxed with a feeling of utter despair.

After the lapse of a few minutes, during which he heard the low sounds of a distant chant, swelling in volume as it came nearer, four temple servants entered the room. They spread a large white sheet on the floor in which he was carefully wrapped. Then two of them took hold of his shoulders and, the other two raising him by the feet, he was carried out of the apartment.

It was dark now and Paolo had no conception as to the direction they took or the distance he was moved. When he was again laid on the ground, he heard the murmur of a crowd and, in spite of the sheet which enveloped him, he saw a wide circle of men form a ring around him. They were all dark-skinned and turbaned. Within the circle he noticed a number of smoking ash heaps, and his nostrils discerned the acrid odor of burned flesh lingering in the

air. About half a score of priests carrying torches stood near by. The Yogi and Jinradasa were at his side.

At a sign from the latter two men separated from the crowd. They approached a wood pile and started to build a funeral pyre. While they piled the logs in symmetrical layers, Paolo again experienced all the exquisite anguish he had undergone when the Yogi had pronounced him dead. Once more he strained and heaved and strove to give a sign of life, but, as before, not the most strenuous efforts could break the spell that held him down inert, motionless and, apparently, dead.

Meanwhile the pyre had been partly completed amidst deep silence. The Yogi raised his staff. Two men lifted his body from the ground and placed it on the faggots. Thorough exhaustion had made him apathetic, but when the attendants started to pile heavy logs on him, his terror became so great that he renewed the struggle with superhuman strength.

Vain, abortive efforts! Faggot after faggot was piled on, and every log of wood seemed to fall, like the blow of a cudgel, with crushing force on his brain. He sank back limp and inert. He prayed for unconsciousness or death, even for madness to overcome him before the torch was applied to the pyre. He was doomed, however, for a man with a fire brand approached the pile on which he was lying. The torch was pushed under the faggots and, imme-

diately, he heard a crackling sound which made his marrow shiver. It was followed by a wreath of smoke and a slender flame which rose at his side. The smoke became thicker, the crackling noise increased to a roar and, now, the sheets of fire burst out all around him. The sharp flame tongues licked at his body and the pain became so exquisite that, at last, his mental endurance gave way.

When consciousness returned Paolo found himself standing on the road to Torre Annunziata. Near by stood an automobile in which was seated the yellow-turbaned stranger who had been a party to the frustration of his plans at Corpo di Cava. It was still dawn, but a rosy shimmer behind Vesuvius announced the imminent break of daylight.

Still dazed, he looked about with a puzzled expression, as if to assure himself of his whereabouts. Then he threw an uncertain glance, in which still lingered some horror, in the direction of Jinradasa.

"You have been dreaming, young man," said the latter, "and you will probably remember your dream as long as you live. Let it be a warning to you. *Addio!*" Then, turning to the chauffeur, he said laconically: *"Torre del Greco."*

XX

THE CAMEO AGAIN

Once more the *Prinzessin Irene* anchored in the Bay of Naples. She had arrived from Genoa early in the morning on her return voyage to New York. It was close to the noon hour, her schedule time for sailing, and nearly all passengers booked from Naples had arrived on board.

The great steamer was surrounded by a fleet of small craft, containing half-naked divers, venders of fruit, laces, corals and tortoise shell goods. Close to its iron walls swarthy musicians in row boats were playing mandolins and singing sweet Neapolitan airs, holding up their hats for the rain of coppers that fell over the railing.

The glorious bay was resplendent in its cerulean beauty, the great crescent of white buildings framing a charming picture of white sails on the blue water and sailing gulls in the bluer sky.

Vesuvius had been at rest for some days. Only a thin vapor cloud hovered over the crater, ragged particles of which were driven towards Monte Somma. Ischia, Procida and Capri lay sleepily in the hazy distance.

On board everyone appeared busy, travelers, sailors and stewards mingling in groups on the promenade deck, in saloons and gangways, while an officer with several attendants, near the accommodation ladder, awaited the arrival of belated passengers.

Oldfield and Brush were leaning against the railing of the promenade deck. Mrs. Emory and Miss Penrose who, with John, had taken passage on the *Prinzessin Irene* were below with a stewardess to arrange their cabins.

Brush looked at his watch. "It's about time for me to go," he said regretfully.

"You needn't hurry, Bob," protested Oldfield; "we have at least ten minutes more to be together."

"True, but I don't care to take any chances of being carried off to New York, or even to Gibraltar, much as I envy you the trip."

"I suppose you are more attracted by that island," smiled John with a motion of his head in the direction of Capri. "I am afraid certain of your principles will not stand the test of time much longer, after what you told me of the little girl over there."

"Well, I stuck to them as long as I could," laughingly admitted Brush. "I am ready now to capitulate as soon as Carmelina leaves a young ladies school in which I intend to place her for a couple of years."

"I hope you'll be happy, Bob."

"I am sure of it. But how about you? I have

noticed within the last few days some indications, among them a certain satisfied expression in Mrs. Emory's face, that point to a similar fate for you."

"May be there are, Bob; but I am not as certain of the result as you seem to be."

"What do you mean?"

"I cannot say more about it just now. In a few minutes, though, before this boat lifts anchor, the cameo is to tell me the future story of my life."

"You talk in conundrums. What about the cameo?"

"I have tried to remove the ill luck, which seems to go with it, by sending Aratta an adequate sum—as a present, mind you."

"It doesn't make any difference as what. You did right, John." Brush warmly shook his hand. "It must have pleased Miss Penrose," he added after a short pause.

"It was partly at her instance that I did it."

"And then?"

"I had the stone mounted in a Roman setting and, at present, it is in Lucile's hands. Her appearance on deck with or without it will tell me whether the curse has been removed or not."

"I am afraid that, at best, it will not vanish altogether during this voyage.—Look who is coming."

Up the accommodation ladder Stickney and the Misses Dryden were scrambling, followed by a couple of *facchini* carrying their luggage.

"They shall not bother me, if the Stone of Messalina speaks right."

The two young men were effusively greeted by the porous plaster manufacturer and the two spinsters who expressed their pleasure at having them for traveling companions.

"I regret not to be of the party," explained Brush, "and am only waiting for the last warning signal to get off the boat. But how is it, ladies, that you have cut your trip so short? If I remember right, Miss Dryden, you intended to spend some time in northern Italy."

"We did," replied Miss Dryden hesitatingly and with a faint blush, "but—"

"You see, they got engaged, and are hurrying home now to—" chuckled Miss Carolyn, attempting to complete the reply.

"This is not the time to speak about it, though," interrupted Stickney. "We got to look after our cabins and baggage. See you later, gentlemen."

As they stepped into the companion way, the last warning signal sounded and, simultaneously with it, Miss Penrose appeared on the promenade deck. From her throat, in scintillating lights, flashed the Cameo of the Empress.

THE END.

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